

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **An Exploratory Study of the Role of Music with Participants in Children's Centres**

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**An Exploratory Study of the Role of Music with  
Participants in Children's Centres**

**by**

**Jessica Pitt BSc., Pg.Dip.**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of PhD**

**Department of Education  
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## **Abstract**

This three-phase, mixed-methods exploratory study explored parents' and Children's Centre practitioners' attitudes towards and perceptions of the role of parent-child music activities in Children's Centres in England. A socio-cultural theoretical framework was adopted which views children's learning as socially and culturally situated: cognitive development is interlinked with social activity. A qualitative interview study (phase one) generated initial themes that were investigated further in a questionnaire study (phase two) so as to establish a rationale for music groups in Children's Centres from the perspectives of parents and practitioners. The themes to emerge were: social, emotional, learning, teaching, parenting, musical, links to home, and organisational. Differences were found between parents and professionals through analysis of the questionnaire study data. Although both groups were very positive overall in their attitudes to music, practitioners were more positive about the perceived benefits to parents than parents reported themselves, and were slightly more positive overall about the benefits of music for children. Parents perceived the emotional benefits for children as most important, and practitioners the learning benefits: both groups perceived the social benefits for children as being of secondary importance. Phase three was a behavioural observation study that compared a parent-child music group with a similar art and outdoor-play group, and found that the music group worked in a way which was distinct from those of the other two groups. This research led to the proposal of a 'musical-social-learning model' which describes the social, cultural, emotional and cognitive learning environment that musical activities afford, in which parent-child pairs co-participate in the musical activities through synchronised use of symbolic actions. This leads to a group symmetry of interaction and shared emotional experiences that may reinforce learning, self-assessment and contribute to positive feelings in the participants.

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## Ethical information

“The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference EDU 11/ 008 in the Department of Education and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton’s Ethics Committee on 15.02.11”.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Background to the research project**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Group music making with very young children and their parents is a popular activity in early childhood. There is a plethora of music education activities for the very young, often at a financial cost to the parent. Children's Centres offer music groups for parents free of charge so that those who may not choose to, or may not be able to pay for such activities can, and do attend with their children. Children's Centres in England are community-based settings for the delivery of inter-professional services for families with children aged 0-5 years. Services include for example: health visiting and midwifery, family support, speech and language therapy, childcare, nutritional advice, smoking cessation, breastfeeding support, counselling services and a programme of parent and child activities. The central premise of this study is that although many Children's Centres are offering music groups as part of their programme of activities for families, the reasons why music is included remains unclear. This study seeks to explore and understand the rationale for Children's Centres selecting music group activities and then to investigate, using various research methods, what the specific characteristics and benefits of music might be for the participants in this context. The term 'rationale' is used here to describe this study's aim to explore the motives behind the reasons for parent-child music groups in Children's Centres from the perspectives of both parents and practitioners, and then to investigate through observation, the specific benefits of music for those who attend. By becoming clearer about these different perspectives the benefits of music in this context may be highlighted and developed. Furthermore by exploring the

specific characteristics of group music making with adults and very young children through a socio-cultural lens it may be possible to see how the group share and experience the phenomenon of music together. The proposal of a learning model of group music making may be useful for parents, practitioners, educators, and policy makers.

The term ‘parents’ is intended to include carers, guardians and other adults acting *in loco parentis*. ‘She’ will be used to describe the ‘individual child’ in this thesis. The term ‘practitioner’ is intended to include all those professionals who are involved in the education and care of young children. These professionals may have a teaching qualification; they may be social work professionals, family support workers or nursery practitioners with post-/under-graduate, foundation degree or NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) level qualifications. The term is also used for music and other arts professionals working in early childhood. This terminology is deliberately non-hierarchical. The term ‘participants’ is used in this research project to describe all those who have taken part in the research: parents, practitioners and children.

## **1.2 Personal background to the project**

The impetus for this thesis came about through my own experience of a unique model of music practice in a Children’s Centre. I was employed (from 2003) as a full-time member of staff as part of a Children’s Centre team for over five years and experienced being part of the evolving ‘community of practice’. The organisation was a trailblazer Sure Start Local Programme and as a team we experienced some

tensions and challenges in the process of ‘working together’ and becoming a unified team.

I was able to share my expertise with my colleagues as part of the staff professional development programme and this helped in finding commonalities and in building what Wenger refers to as a ‘shared repertoire’ (1998) that included music. My employment began as lead musician on a Youth Music-funded, two-year project that was investigated as part of a research project by Northumbria University. The project was based in two geographical locations (East and North East of England) both with similar levels of deprivation, with the aim of investigating the impact of music making on the literacy and numeracy development of pre-school children (YouthMusic, 2006).

After the project finished, I continued the work that had been started through the project. Finding funding for my role involved applying for grants from a variety of sources and unconventional uses of core funding. It depended on the autonomy of the centre manager who responded to demand from local families and had a visionary outlook. The music practice included work with nurseries and daycare centres: working with children and training early years practitioners; developing parent-child music groups of varying types both universal (open to any family), and targeted groups for specific parents and their children (for example: children with additional needs, parents with postnatal depression). Some of this work involved collaboration with other team members.

The music became embedded as part of the centre’s practice and the music work grew and evolved with the employment of music therapists to work alongside the

existing musical activities. This Children's Centre remains an exemplar of music practice embedded in the core delivery of services for families and offers a variety of training for parents and professionals in creative arts practice. (For more detail about this model of embedding music practice please see; Arculus, 2013; Brookson, 2013; Pitt, 2009; Smithurst and Pitt, 2004).

The interest for this research grew from these experiences: I became interested in different approaches towards and ways of facilitating music for very young children and their parents. I also became aware of the differing perspectives and attitudes amongst the practitioners and parents as to why they thought music might be beneficial.

### **1.3 Aims of the research**

Music groups are ubiquitous in Children's Centre programmes of activities yet there is no clear rationale to explain why music has been chosen as an activity to offer to families. Anecdotal evidence includes the fact that parents ask for music groups and there is a view that music helps with children's development, especially with language skills.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (EYFS) has three prime areas of learning; 'personal, social and emotional development', 'communication and language' and 'physical development' (DfE, 2012, pp. 4-5). Research (to be detailed in the literature review of this thesis) suggests that musical activities benefit



children's development across these prime areas of learning. Furthermore the 'school readiness' agenda of the current coalition government is now central to what it calls the core purpose of Children's Centres:

"The core purpose of Sure Start children's centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families, with a particular focus on those in greatest need. They work to make sure all children are properly prepared for school, regardless of background or family circumstances. They also offer support to parents." (DfE, 2011)

Group parent-child musical activities may be helpful in developing some of the important characteristics of 'school readiness' in young children such as; 'confidence, independence and curiosity' (PACEY, 2013), and may also provide a vehicle for parent support.

This research will explore the role of music in Children's Centre settings by bringing together the views of parents and a range of Children's Centre practitioners as well as the observed behaviours of the participants, by asking the following research questions:

- Why is music offered in Children's Centres?
- What do Children's Centre practitioners and parents perceive to be the benefits of music for their children?
- Do parents and children benefit from their involvement in the group music making sessions together?

## **1.4 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is shaped by socio-cultural theory. This theoretical approach grew from the work of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) who suggested that society has an important contribution to make to individual development, and that interaction between parents, carers, peers and the wider cultural context contribute to an individual's higher order functions (Vygotsky, 1978). His thesis was that human mental functions originate socially, both between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological): these functions range from voluntary attention and memory through to the formation of concepts. Vygotsky's view is of a dynamic interaction in which society is viewed as influencing people, and in which people exert a reciprocal influence on society.

The 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978) is a concept which describes how instruction and learning take place – children's development proceeds through participation in activities slightly beyond their competence (in the 'zone of proximal development') with the help of adults or skillful peers.

Barbara Rogoff (1991, 2003) draws on Vygotskian notions of learning as socially and culturally situated, with a particular interest in cultural aspects of collaboration, learning through observation, and the role of adults as guides to children's opportunities to participate in cultural activities.

These theoretical ideas seem particularly apt to a study in the community-based, informal-learning setting of the Children's Centre, in which children participate in activities alongside their parents. Education and learning in this context may be seen

as both social and cultural: the practitioners, parents and peers all contribute to the learning context and influence one another. Although not mentioned explicitly as part of socio-cultural theory, emotional learning is also considered within this study's theoretical framework, as parent-child interactions take place through emotional bonds and ties. Within this broad framework the earliest 'intersubjective' interactions between adult and child (Fogel, 1977; Stern, Beebe, Jaffe, and Bennett, 1977; Trevarthen, 1999, 2005; Trevarthen and Malloch, 2000) are viewed as essentially musical in nature, in that sustained shared empathetic meanings are developed in a 'musical' fashion. Musical activities may thus be seen as an intrinsic part of social, cultural and emotional learning between parents and young children.

Establishing affectional ties to a primary caregiver is the basis of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1953) and the importance of a secure base has been found to be helpful for a child's well-being and development (Gerhardt, 2004) and indeed to provide her with a 'working model' of social relationships (Durkin, 1998, p.55).

The role of ritual in group music making activities in the Children's Centre context is also considered as part of the theoretical framework, where participation in action songs allows children and adults to interact in a predetermined manner and may give rise to a shared 'communitas' experience (Turner, 1982). Eckerdal and Merker (2009) suggest that action songs may be developmentally significant and may demonstrate truly human, ritual culture.

The conception of the young child for the purposes of this study is one that aligns itself to ‘the new social studies of childhood’, which view children as individuals in their own right. Childhood is perceived as a participatory phase in life, in which children can be viewed as co-constructors of knowledge (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence, 2007; Lansdown, 2001, 2005; Woodhead and Montgomery, 2003).

## **1.5 Plan of this research project and outline of the thesis**

This research project is in three phases: the first two explore the perspectives and attitudes of parents and practitioners towards the underlying reasons for offering music groups in Children’s Centres. The third phase investigates, through observation, what are the specific benefits of the music activities as compared with two other parent-child activity groups (art and outdoor activities). The three phases will provide a rich picture of perceptions of, attitudes towards and observations of parent-child group music activity that will inform conclusions about the role of music for those who participate in and those who are employed as practitioners in Children’s Centres.

### **1.5.1 Plan of the research**

As the topic is under-researched, an exploratory study is required and a mixed methods, exploratory, sequential design has been chosen as the most suitable to gather both qualitative and quantitative data to provide as clear and full an account as possible. The exploratory nature of the research led to the decision to undertake an interview study as the first phase of the project. The findings from this were then used in the design of the second phase: a questionnaire study which aims to

generalise the findings to the wider population. The final phase of the project looks closely at what is happening in the real world, ‘to put flesh on the bones’ (Galton, 1999) and observe precisely what happens in the music group as compared with art and outdoor activities.

The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods provides internal support for findings across two methodological domains. The numerical data enhances and supports the findings from interpretative analysis, and gives strength and rigour to the approach (Burke-Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell, 1994, 2003; Creswell and Plano-Clark, 2007; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins, 2009; Plano-Clark and Creswell, 2008; Siraj-Blatchford, Sammons, Taggart, Sylva, and Melhuish, 2006).

### 1.5.2 Outline of the thesis

The literature review (Chapter 2) starts by discussing the context of the Children’s Centre in England from historical and policy perspectives, and addresses issues concerning their organisation and considering musical activities in Children’s Centres in particular. There then follows an examination of social, emotional and cultural learning - focusing on the role music plays in these domains. Lastly, research on musical development in early childhood, musical parenting, specifically on parent-child group music-making, will conclude the literature review chapter and will be used to support the argument that this research area is an important one which deserves further development.

The design of the research is outlined in Chapter three and adopts a mixed methods approach with a pragmatist outlook. From the Peircean viewpoint knowledge

requires ‘good reasons’: everything can be questioned. It adopts a ‘fallibilist’ position in relation to ‘truth and knowledge’ that demands a willingness to change one’s mind, being open to criticism and that any truth can be wrong – the quest for knowledge is thus never ending and therefore results of inquiry are open to question. (Talisie and Aikin, 2008, p.30). This paradigm allows the selection of both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyse data. The pragmatic paradigm is based in real-world, practice oriented research and methods are matched to the questions and purpose of the research.

Chapters four, five and six describe the aims, procedures, findings and results from the three different phases of the research project: firstly an interview study, followed by a questionnaire study and finally an observation study. The results and findings from qualitative and quantitative analyses enable any differences between the perceptions of participants to emerge.

The discussion chapter (seven) draws the theoretical framework of the research together with the findings and results to propose a musical-social-learning model to describe parent-child group music-making activity in the Children’s Centre context. The final chapter also makes some suggestion for future research, for policy and for practice. Music and the arts may be regarded as important drivers for social, emotional and personal well-being and group musical activities may be particularly helpful in creating a sense of belonging, creating group symmetry of interaction that may lead to positive feelings and confidence.

This concludes the introductory chapter to this thesis – explaining the aims of the research, the personal journey that led to the desire to study this topic in more detail, the theoretical framework that seems most appropriate to a study located in the informal learning context of the Children’s Centre, and finally an outline of the thesis, with the proposal of a new theoretical model. The following chapter presents the review of literature relevant to and underpinning this research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review: Musical development, learning and interaction in Children's Centres in England**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This thesis is concerned with social-learning models of music education in a community-based context, the literature review will reflect this focus. The argument for this study will be made by examining strands of developmental psychology literature that relate to learning across social, emotional and cultural domains of development, and the ontogeny of musical development in early childhood. 'Communicative Musicality' is examined as this concept has had a strong influence on contemporary early childhood music education this leads on to studies of musical parenting and, specifically to literature on parent-child group music making which concludes the chapter. The chapter starts by discussing the context of the Children's Centre, from historical and policy perspectives: it addresses some general issues surrounding their organisation and considers musical activities in Children's Centres in particular.

#### **2.2 The Children's Centre**

The following section of this chapter discusses Children's Centres: multi-professional hubs in the community offering a range of services for families with children under five years old. Music groups for parents and children are commonly offered as part of Children's Centres' programmes of activities for families with children under five years old. As an informal music education setting the origins and



political motivations behind Children's Centres' institution will provide contextual information about the learning setting. This is followed by a discussion of the complexities of inter-professional working followed by the concluding part looks at some of the issues surrounding Children's Centres, and in particular the inclusion of parent-child music groups as part of the activity programme for families.

### 2.2.1 Historical perspective

The history of the initial 'New' Labour policy initiatives that started the Sure Start/Children's Centre programme go back to The Plowden Report (Blackstone, 1967), findings from evaluations of the US Head Start programme (Welshman, 2010) and a study of the effectiveness of High Scope education approaches.

Alongside Plowden and Head Start evaluations a longitudinal study of the short- and long-term effects of the US High Scope approach to early childhood education for children experiencing poverty was also considered influential. Briefly the High Scope approach is characterised by active learning (using Vygotskian principles of scaffolding a child's learning), based on a daily routine comprising a predictable sequence of events with *plan-do-review* as a central aspect of the active learning approach (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1998; 1993). Findings showed that randomly assigned individuals to the High Scope programme: completed more schooling; committed fewer crimes; had higher rates of employment and earned a higher income than non-participants. The results suggested that programmes considered high quality and including parental involvement had long-term benefits (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1993).

Norman Glass's (1999) proposal for Sure Start was built on many of these findings,

“It [Sure Start] is consciously intended to achieve long-term results such as better educational performance, lower unemployment, less criminality and reduced levels of teenage pregnancy” (1999, p.258).

The emphasis from the outset was to focus on preventative action through support to ensure that children developed to their full potential. This support was to be targeted at the family and community level through an integrated approach to the provision of services. The ministerial steering group consulted widely on policy developments and initiatives, to ensure that the proposals were innovative and pioneering in their desire for ‘joined-up’ approaches to working with children and families in the early years (Glass, 1999, p. 260).

By 2002, Children's Centres were first suggested with the devolution of childcare services to local authorities. These centres were to offer increased childcare and were to widen their geographical catchment beyond those wards considered particularly deprived in an area. A ten-year strategy for Children's Centres was announced in 2004, with a target of 3,500 centres by 2010. (The Department for Education record that at the end of April 2013 the number of centres was 3,116). The Children's Centre Census (4Children, 2013) found that centres are operating with a decreased budget in 2014/15, with a focus on implementing the ‘Troubled Families’ programme which seeks to turnaround 120,000 families with particularly complex needs by 2015 (p.6), and having a core role and function in the Government's support for childcare for disadvantaged two-year olds, seeking to reach 40% most vulnerable by September 2014 (4Children, 2013, p.7).

Policy and investment in early years education and care was one of the priorities of the 'New' Labour government from as early as 1998. The wider 'social exclusion agenda' was central to Tony Blair's 'Third Way' policies; based on publications from the 'Social Exclusion Unit' who reported directly to the Prime Minister and had a co-ordinating role across government departments to help create 'joined-up' government for 'joined-up' problems with the 'New Deal' initiative to encourage people back into work, heralding a new relationship between the state, parents and their children. (Anning, Ball, Barnes, Belsky, Botting, Frost, Kurtz, Leyland, Meadows, Melhuish, and Tunstill, 2004; Clarke, 2006; Gewirtz, 2010; Hey and Bradford, 2006; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2010). The 'social exclusion agenda' attempted to make certain values, attitudes and behaviours universally acceptable and as Gewirtz (2010) suggests this characterised the ambitious programme of eradicating class differences by attempting to transform parenting behaviours of 'working class' families into those of 'middle class' ones.

A series of well-documented child abuse scandals culminated in Lord Laming's (2003) Inquiry and Report into the death of Victoria Climbié, a young girl who was the victim of such abuse. His findings chimed with the 'social exclusion agenda' and led to the Every Child Matters Green Paper. In the foreword to the bill the Prime Minister wrote;

“Responding to the inquiry headed by Lord Laming into Victoria's death, we are proposing here a range of measures to reform and improve children's care – crucially, for the first time ever requiring local authorities to bring together in one place under one person services for children, and at the same time

suggesting real changes in the way those we ask to do this work carry out their tasks on our and our children's behalf" (Blair, in DfE, 2003, p.1).

From the very top of government children and families were in the spotlight and reforming the administration of key services for children was a fundamental aspect of the ensuing Children Act (2004), followed by the Childcare Act (2006). 'Joining-up' services and encouraging dialogue and communication between professionals from different disciplines was viewed as crucial to safeguarding children and was a recommendation of the Laming Report (2003, p.365) that had found, amongst a number of contributing factors, ineffective communication between agencies significantly at fault. Sure Start Local Programmes from which Children's Centres developed, were seen as prime locations for joining-up children's service provision for the care of the very youngest children and their families with inter-disciplinary, multi-agencies to working together (Anning, Ball, Barnes, Belsky, Botting, Frost, Kurtz, Leyland, Meadows, Melhuish and Tunstill, 2004; Belsky, Melhuish, Barnes, Leyland, and Romaniuk, 2006; Laming, 2003; Malin and Morrow, 2007; Morrow, Malin, and Jennings, 2005).

### 2.2.2 Inter-professional working

Presenting the background context of the Children's Centre organisation is helpful to understanding the complexities that becoming one organisation has posed for many practitioners. It is a multi-dimensional process and can be challenging to established relationships and hierarchies (Everett, Homstead, and Drisko, 2007; Frost, 2005; Gasper, 2010; MacNaughton, 2003; Pitt, 2009). It is into this working environment that music practitioners may enter as freelance specialists and they may have to

negotiate structures, hierarchies and boundaries within the organisation that may have a history beyond the Children's Centre institution.

One of the models that has been helpful in understanding the integration of multi-professional teams has been Lave and Wenger's notion of 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998). Wenger suggests that a shared community evolves through three dimensions: 'mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire' (ibid. p.73). Part of the process of becoming a 'community of practice' necessitates individuals encountering new practices and venturing into unfamiliar professional territories. This leads gradually to an alignment of energies, actions and practices that help in forming an identity of belonging, of being part of the community with shared ways of doing things, an identity as a form of competence that allows membership of the community. Lave and Wenger's model is based in a social theory of learning, considering theories of social structure and situated experience as one dimension and theories of practice and identity as another with 'learning as participation' caught in the middle of the two axes. They also include notions of power; meaning; collectivity - (mechanisms of social cohesion and formations of social configurations) and subjectivity (addressing the nature of individuality as an expression of engagement in the social world) (Wenger, 1998, pp. 12-14).

Negotiating ways of working together is one of the major challenges to joined-up working within Children's Centres. The following section discusses other issues that have emerged as a result of the Sure Start and Children's Centre model of family intervention.

### 2.2.3 Further Issues with Children's Centres

As well as inter-professional working, there are some other issues that relate to Children's Centres that are relevant to this research, which are outlined below.

#### (I) Diversity of local programmes

The National Evaluation of Sure Start Local Programmes in England (NESS) (Anning et al., 2004) that took place in the early days of the Sure Start programme identified that measuring effectiveness of local programmes was difficult, as local autonomy over the form of the programme in an area meant there was great diversity of interventions making effectiveness specific to the local programme and therefore difficult to assess nationally. This autonomy given to centre managers at the outset has been maintained, with the needs of local families being the starting point for interventions. Analysis of the local context coupled with an awareness of political and social change is crucial to understanding how the model works (Barlow, Kirkpatrick, Wood, Ball, and Stewart-Brown, 2007). This has meant that music activities have been included by centre managers as they see fit to meet the needs of local families.

#### (II) Models of parenting

One of the criticisms made of the Sure Start and Children's Centre initiatives was that they promote a specific view of mothering. Clarke (2006) argued that complex research evidence had been transformed into target outcomes for Sure Start Children's Centres that has resulted in national policy that promotes a view of mothers as responsible for their children's development and well-being and that this

view could easily slide towards a moral discourse that blames parents/mothers for poor outcomes.

Middle-class conceptions of motherhood have guided the form and content of programmes of activities that are offered to families and this helps to construct and maintain a dominant ideology of motherhood (Clarke, 2006; Gerhardt, 2004; Hey and Bradford, 2006; House, 2011; Stern, Bruschweiler-Stern, and Freeland, 1998; Suissa, 2010). Aspiring and competent mothers with ‘careers’ and ‘achieving’ children are set as the norm against which mothers are measured.

Hey and Bradford’s (2006) study of one local setting discovered that a discourse of ‘respectability’ and being a ‘responsible mother’ predominated amongst participants and was owned by some mothers but excluded other women and indeed sometimes their own ‘self’. This study revealed the complexity of reaching the ‘hard to reach’ families. Those mothers who do not conform to the dominant notion were subject to blame from other mothers who felt they were not participating in the true ‘spirit’ of Sure Start; they merely, “took what was on offer without putting anything back in” (Hey and Bradford, 2006, p. 59). There are tensions and challenges in offering activities free at the point of delivery as part of a policy-driven organisation. A group activity can become embroiled in wider aims to improve ‘parenting’ or a child’s readiness for school or to build social/cultural capital of parents.

#### 2.2.4 Music group activities in the Children's Centre context

Music group activities frequently have a model of delivery that might be considered 'middle-class', with children and parents sitting in a circle and participating together. Often activities are planned using Western-classical or folk music traditions with a focus on group singing (Young, 2007), although other approaches have emerged with different models of participation (Young, 2005a).

##### *Youth Music funded activities*

Youth Music is a UK-based organisation that funds out-of-school music-making from early years to young adult, whose current mission "is to be at the heart of children and young people's music-making, identifying and investing in learning activities for those with least opportunity" (Youth Music website, accessed 30.7.13). They have been funding early years music projects in England since the late 1990's. This has produced much innovative music work in Children's Centres although it has often been short-term and rarely sustained over time, as a requirement of the funding has been to innovate each time new funding is required (Lonie, 2010; Young, 2007). Children's Centres may be unable to pay the self-employed musician once the project comes to an end and their expertise has sometimes not been shared or even seen by other professionals as they are not employed as a full-time team member, only arriving to deliver the music sessions and leave again. Although some projects have included training elements as aspects of their project, the rapid turnover amongst early years practitioners has meant that sustainability in settings is difficult to maintain. As a result innovative approaches have not filtered through to sustained



practice and the traditional, circle-based, adult-led music sessions endure as a dominant model of music for young children.

One of the desired outcomes of a recent Youth Music funded project in North Tyneside (Lamb and Maines-Beasley, 2013) located in a Nursery and Children's Centre was to increase understanding amongst parents/carers of the benefits of music making (Outcome 5, 2013, p.13), as well as outcomes focused on improving personal, social and emotional development and the communication, language and literacy development in children identified as being at high risk of developmental delay (Outcomes 3 and 4, 2013, pp.11-12). The findings were mixed (2013, p. 14), although it was clear that the home music environment did not always include the music that the musician was offering at the setting. It appeared that children were listening to pop and rock music as well as singing nursery rhymes. A parent-child music group was started by the project musician at the Children's Centre. It was felt that of the 8-10 families who attended, most were probably already convinced of the benefits of music and those whom they were trying to attract (i.e. parents of children identified as at risk of developmental delay) did not attend. Any possible reasons why this may have been the case were not reported, but attempts were made to try to reach the parents by other means: a website including a songbank resource, the project musician attended the parents' evening at the nursery, and there was a performance at the Sage Gateshead to which 50 parents attended with their children (2013, pp.13-14).

The impact report of Youth Music's work 2012-2013 analysed the early years music

projects that finished in 2012/13 in the light of their recent research investigating the concept of ‘hard to reach’ parents (Osgood, Albon, Allen, and Hollingsworth, 2013). They found that some of the musical identities that families brought to music sessions were not necessarily considered valid (although this research was not exclusively focused on Children’s Centres). Furthermore they felt that participants may have been expected to conform to what was seen as ‘valid musicality’ within the music making session rather than exploring first what the music making at home might have to offer the group sessions (Youth Music, 2014, p.53).

The research project undertaken by Osgood, Albon, Allen and Hollingsworth (2013) concluded from the review of literature that the term ‘hard to reach’ might be (re)considered to focus on policy, planning and the delivery of services rather than viewing individuals or groups as ‘problematic’. The case studies conducted as a strand of the research found that there was an interconnection between where the music sessions were located (multiple services may be available in one venue) and attendance. The music sessions were most likely to engage participation, “when the music leader is a recognisable member of the local community. However, where music leaders are ‘parachuted in’ they lack this connection” (Osgood, et al., 2013, p. 14). There were differing views about a skilled music leader versus a known practitioner leading musical activities for families. It would appear from this research that the familiarity of both the venue and the leader could make a difference to engagement with families in music.

### *Responding to Diversity*

Responding to the diverse needs and ethnicity of the local community can be an important aspect to including every family in the group activities offered through a Children's Centre. Some parents for whom English is an additional language may value the learning about English culture and language that a music group activity can provide. Through repeated song repertoire, words may be acquired, rehearsed and practised in an informal and unobtrusive manner. Others may find the traditional approach exclusive and unwelcoming and it may not be culturally appropriate.

Street and Abbas (2013) suggested that practice should be sensitive to parents' attitudes to childcare, education, as well as everyday daily routines. Work with mothers from South Asian, Muslim traditions involved engaging women with songs through exploring questions about their own identities (Street and Abbas, 2013, p. 276). Improvisational and playful approaches may work well for some families and less well for others. There is diversity in parenting styles: not every parent may be happy being a child's playmate and may prefer a more formal, structured leading of the music session (Young, Street and Davies, 2007).

### *Models of music practice*

The Music One-to-One project, a three-phase research project which aimed to apply theories of infant musicality to practice by firstly taking account of the views of both parents and practitioners about music practices at home and in early years settings before designing new practical musical approaches and finally by exploring how

much these new approaches had influenced musical practices at home. The research found that when parents adopted a passive role or seemed to opt out completely there was a tendency for the music practitioners to: “project the sense that something is not working back onto mothers” (Young et al., 2007, p.263). Although this project was with children under two years old, perhaps a little younger than this study’s child participants, some of the findings may be helpful, namely that music had become incorporated into daily activities at home and parents claimed to sing more as a result of the project. Findings associated with utilising a variety of approaches to leading musical activities in response to the diversity of parenting styles may also be applicable.

The final stage of the Music One-to-One project (Young, Street and Davies, 2007) was to disseminate the findings and to produce bespoke materials and professional development for interested parties. The innovative, consultative approach of this project which sought the views of parents in the first phase is still a useful exemplar for music practice, especially when, seven years on, the research ‘Engaging hard to reach parents in early years music making’ (Osgood et al., 2013) finds that there still seems to be a ‘valid musicality’ discourse prevalent in early years Youth Music projects that excludes some families whose musical identity may not conform to the expected/valid model.

It seems there is an existential issue of projects needing to identify ‘problems’ in order to justify the need for their existence in particular locations, with an underlying remit to ‘make a difference’. This in turn may perpetuate models of parenting

discussed earlier in section 2.2.3, (II) above (pp.31-32). This does not mean to say that early years music projects are not worthwhile and valuable to families with young children, but perhaps the conceptualising of participants in terms of 'deficit' and in need of 'improvement' is not a helpful starting point for visiting projects. By highlighting the skills and expertise of a visiting project musician as 'expert' with project outcomes sometimes focusing on improving standards and quality of music making in early childhood, the Children's Centre settings chosen to benefit from the project and their practitioners may feel that they lack knowledge and skills which the musician can provide. It is interesting to note that some recent Youth Music projects have included the need for musicians to acquire the underpinning knowledge and expertise of early childhood education (Lamb and Maines-Beasley, 2013).

Perhaps by adopting a 'community of practice' approach where skills and knowledge are to be shared together between the visiting music practitioner and the setting, they may achieve: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998, p.73 and Pitt, 2009, p.460) and a different project model might be realised. This would require perhaps more 'lead-in' time to a project where the project practitioner spends some time getting to know the staff team and attending staff meetings for a while before the active phase of the project can begin. This is an approach that relies on the attitude of all the participants, an honest meeting point where no one is seen as having the knowledge and power and all recognise that they have something to learn from the process.

Clearly music group activities in the Children's Centre context have tensions and complexities that are interlinked with diversity of parenting styles, the nature of funded music projects, families that have been considered 'hard to reach,' and yet important to reach, and the sustainability of the benefits of a music project after the funding has finished. Findings from the Osgood et al. study (2013) indicated that a practitioner's familiarity with families can make a difference to their (the families') engagement in activities, perhaps musical activities led by Children's Centre practitioners may be more effective in engaging certain families in music making than an 'expert', yet unfamiliar music practitioner. Expert knowledge may be held by both the visiting music practitioner, the Children's Centre practitioners and parents, and mutual sharing and valuing of skills and knowledge might be a valuable project approach.. Perhaps from a socio-cultural perspective it could be seen as a version of the 'zone of proximal development' where learning and knowledge is co-constructed between all participants.

The review now turns to developmental psychology research, taking the socio-cultural theoretical framework as a guide to focusing the review, so that the next section discusses learning and development in young children across social, emotional and cultural domains.

### **2.3 Learning across developmental domains**

Vygotsky (1978) acknowledged that learning starts long before a child starts school, he saw learning and development interrelated from the first days of life. The proposition is:

“that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalised, they become part of the child’s independent developmental achievement.” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.90)

This quotation from ‘Mind and Society’, indicates that Vygotsky saw learning and development as separate entities. Learning is a necessary aspect to developing, “culturally organised, specifically human psychological functions” (1978, p.90), and organised learning results in mental development. A key element of his theory was the contribution of interaction and cooperation with people in learning and development.

As parent-child group music activities in Children’s Centres may be seen as beneficial to social, emotional and cultural domains of learning and also to contribute to young children’s development there now follows a review of literature related to these three domains of learning and development. The review appears under individual section headings with the ways in which music may be relevant to these domains of learning as the main focus of the review.

### 2.3.1 Social learning

The developmental social psychologist Kevin Durkin defines socialisation as,

“The process whereby people acquire the rules of behavior and the systems of beliefs and attitudes that equip a person to function effectively as a member of society” (1998, p. 48).

He explains that there are many conflicting descriptions of what appears at first to be the natural, human process of socialisation. Freud’s (1966) view of society represented by parents repressing and disciplining a reluctant child into acceptable norms of behaviour is contrasted with Schaffer’s (1984a) *mutuality model* which conceives of social development as inter-dependently transacted between parent and child. Schaffer argues that socialisation is a process that involves several stages; the development of relationships; the development of language and the development of social knowledge (ibid. p.46). It could be added that music has a part to play at each stage of this process.

Ujhelyi (1997) remarks from the evolutionary perspective that in order for the evolution of communication to have occurred, a system-level organisational change in the form of ‘sociality’ must have taken place in our ancient human history. It is through a network of social behaviours and interaction that the framework for communication is constructed. Kaye (1977) argued that the infant’s pattern of burst and pause in sucking in the first months of life may be a possible adaptive function to elicit response from their mother and represents the beginnings of turn-taking: give and take. Schaffer, Collis and Parsons (1977) explored the ‘overlap’ between mother-infant interaction, and ‘give and take’ synchrony. Their studies of both one and two



year olds; found that looking and vocalising had become linked by the age of two, but were not found connected in one year olds.

Developmental psychology literature concerned with socialisation reveals that from birth humans are not only social but also musical beings. Present in the earliest social interactions between parent and child are musicality and inter-relatedness. Fernald's (1992) pioneering study of infants' preference for the human voice compared to other sounds; and Papoušek and Papoušek's (1996) study demonstrated that infant-directed speech, or 'motherese', has elevated pitch and a melodic quality that shows cooperation and synchrony between parent and child. Trevarthen and Malloch's (2000) research found musicality in the reciprocity in interaction between parent and infant – 'communicative musicality', in which infant and adult negotiate a 'dance of reciprocity' (Stern, 1985) through pitched and rhythmically structured turn-taking interactions (Schaffer, Collis and Parsons, 1977) that seem to be mutually affective and reciprocal. What is interesting is that a developmental psychologist uses the term 'musicality' in infants to describe how social we are as human beings, from birth. The musicality which infants display and engender in the adults to whom they relate plays a prominent part in the mutuality necessary for early infant interactions.

Fogel believes that connections to other people are fundamental to the way individuals think and develop their sense of self-identity: that it is through the 'micro-culture' of the parent-infant relationship that an infant learns the 'macro-culture' of the wider community (Fogel, 1993, p. 13). From the very beginning

musicality helps to shape the ‘micro-culture’ that will inform the wider cultural community to which the child belongs.

Bruner (1977) refers to the significance of mother-infant collaboration in achievement of a joint task and language acquisition. The social opportunities that playful activities such as peekaboo games provide for children, allow them to gain pleasure from rules and learn about anticipation, and are helpful for both social and emotional development and learning. Bruner suggests that through early interactions between mother and infant a shared repertoire of procedures for operating jointly is established, which shapes the structures of initial grammar, his working hypothesis is that “the ontogenetic development of joint action between mother and child contributed to the mastery of grammar” (1977 p.274). It is in the ‘give and take’ formats (Bruner 1977, pp.281-287) that the mother can mark important segments or juncture points in the rule-bound sequences and thus establish a familiar context for the infant initial babbling sounds to be structured as part of the action pattern, all within a playful ambience of early turn-taking. It would appear that Bruner’s argument is that socialisation, communication and language acquisition are inextricably linked and it could be added that musicality is a key component. Many of the playful games and activities that Bruner uses as collaborative examples may be found in the repertoire of the Children’s Centre music group and it will be interesting to see how parents and children use the social opportunities that the group provides for their own learning and development.

Sawyer (2005, p. 52) refers to ‘interactional synchrony’ as coined by Condon and Ogston (see 1971) in relation to group musical performance that requires attunement and flexibility to modify performer’s actions in response to the other. He compares musical interaction in jazz to the interactional synchrony between mother and infant that has been studied by Trevarthen which demonstrates that young children use their instinctive ability to synchronise with another’s interaction to adapt to adult social life (Trevarthen, 1979; Tronick, Als, and Brazelton, 1980). From birth, it would appear, human beings utilise sound patterns, organised in time, to express to one another a connectedness that may be essential for survival, and could be seen as paving the way for the acquisition of the rules of social interaction in their cultural circumstance. Music is at the core of these pioneering attempts by young children at socialisation and music remains a product of social division and structure, to which a child adapts as she matures (Hargreaves, 1986). Synchronising musically within the group music context will be an aspect that is investigated through this research project.

As a child develops, the wider social environment must be navigated - Rogoff asserts that, “Through guided participation with others, children come to understand and participate in the skilled activities of their culture.” (Rogoff, 1991, p. 191) She argues that although both Piaget and Vygotsky emphasised the role of social interaction in cognitive development, they do so in different ways. Piaget emphasised the role of conflict between same-status peers: by examining logical statements, the social interaction serves to explore logical consequences – ‘a meeting of minds’. Vygotsky on the other hand focused on the ‘zone of proximal development’ with shared problem-solving, and collaboration leading to joint solutions – ‘a shared thinking

process' (ibid. p.192). Both definitions involve a social interaction, Piaget from an individualistic perspective and Vygotsky from a collaborative position. Loris Malaguzzi in an interview four years before his death outlines the subtleties of difference between Piagetian and Vygotskian theories of development. The Piagetian influenced dominant American theories of the last century of "a child endowed with his own intelligence," were countered by the Reggio Emilia view of, "a child who develops himself interacting and developing with others" (Rankin, 2004, p. 82). Malaguzzi argues that one cannot have social development without cognitive development and vice versa. The social dimension of the parent-child music group is that of an informal sociocultural learning space. Malaguzzi's argument that children's cognitive development ensues within that context will be investigated as part of this research.

Building strong affective bonds may be possible in the parent-child group music making sessions, through participating together in playful musical activities. The quality and security of these early relationships with key caregivers can be instrumental to a child's learning and development. Durkin (1998) describes differences of opinion among psychologists where findings from various studies demonstrate that cognitive gains through social interaction can be obtained across several of the Piagetian tasks. Children performed at a higher level in twos or threes than they had done individually in pre-test (see Doise, Mugny and Perret-Cleremont, 1975). It is clear that cognition and social skills are interlinked, children do not exist in a vacuum and relationships are part of every child's life.

The music group in the Children's Centre may provide an environment for emotional, cultural interchanges that can strengthen relationships between group members and the parent-child dyad. Durkin argues that humans are emotionally and socially entangled beings who can only be fully understood from a developmental perspective (1998, p.56). It is clear that social learning does not occur in a vacuum but is part of an integrated and dynamic network of emotions, cultural transmission and relationships in which communication helps to solve problems and think, whilst understanding how one is different from another and this develops a sense of one's own identity.

Tickell (2011) in her review of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) considered that personal, social and emotional development (PSED) should be one of the three prime areas of learning in early childhood. I would argue that it is the most important area through which children gain the skills and abilities to learn and develop. As has been demonstrated by the arguments of developmental psychologists, music is fundamental and instrumental to this prime area of learning and development.

### 2.3.2 Emotional learning

If it is assumed that children are social beings from birth (Durkin, 1998) then relationships have to be integral to social behaviour. Howard Gardner in 'Frames of Mind' (1984, p.253) speaks of 'personal intelligences' (one of the intelligences that form part of his 'multiple intelligences' theory) as being concerned on the one hand, with an ability to "*access one's own feeling life*" to discriminate, label and go on to synthesise these feelings into symbolic codes which then serve to assist in understanding and guiding behaviour. Personal intelligence also involves an ability

to look outwards at the feeling life of others, “*to notice and make distinctions with other individuals,*” especially with their moods; motivations; intentions and temperaments. Clarke, Dibben and Pitts (2012, p.82) state that, “Emotions guide our actions, enable expression of our states to others, and allow us to interpret other people.” These inward and outward dimensions of personal intelligences that lead to understanding feeling and mood states in oneself and others, must start to be acquired during the primary relationship of mother and child, in which ‘musicality’ plays a strong part. The parent-child music group activity in the Children’s Centre may be a site for developing and nurturing this primary relationship through musical activities. Perceptions about the benefits of music will be gained from practitioners, and parents by means of interview and questionnaire studies. Children’s behaviours in the music group activity will be observed and it may be possible to identify any emotional benefits resulting from this parent-child joint participation.

Powers and Trevarthen discovered in a comparative study of mothers and infants in Scotland and Japan that mothers and infants in each culture matched one another in the ways they exchanged feelings and sounds although there were wide differences between the two cultures in pitch and duration (Powers and Trevarthen, 2010, p. 232).

In the primary adaptive function of mother-infant interaction music is so evident that Dissanayake suggests that its role reinforces the emotional coordination between the pair, promoting feelings of enjoyment and strengthening early bonds. It may also serve to soothe and regularise functions between mother and child (Dissanayake, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2010). The surging, explosive feelings that are caused through

repetition by mothers in their multi-modal stimulation of their infants, Stern called ‘vitality affect’ (Stern, 1985). Stern, Beebe, Jaffe, and Bennett (1977) found that mothers use vocal and kinesic phrases in a series of repeated runs to produce an episode of maintained engagement and to order the stimulus world for their infant interactions. Dissanayake also suggests that vocal, visual and kinaesthetic behaviours are part of what she terms ‘aesthetic operations’ in ceremonial practices that may have helped our ancestors to cope emotionally with uncertainty (2010, p. 25).

Skills in expressing feelings must be considered alongside other competencies in ‘readiness for school’. Songs, rhymes and games focusing on emotions and feelings can help to build children’s socio-emotional vocabulary and confidence that equips a child well for cognitive learning (Figueroa-Sánchez, 2008). Freeman (1997) points to the use of music by our ancestors for bonding beyond the nuclear family. Group music making seems to have its origins in our ancestry and its value may be emotional as well as social. One only has to think of sports fans gathering in a stadium for the game to be reminded of the power of joint singing of a familiar song full of significance for the members in establishing a coherence and a sense of social bonding, as well as the negative powers of reinforcing the boundary between those who belong and those who do not. Belonging to the group, and the sense of ‘ritual’ described by Turner (1974, 1982, 1986, 2009) as occurring in group situations, may play a part in a young child’s cultural; social and emotional development in the Children’s Centre context of this research study.

From the sociological perspective, DeNora considers that culture and emotion must be explored together. She outlines thematically how culture influences emotion: 1) through modelling and interaction, with tacit reference to cultural resources, 2) through two-way connections between experience, emotion, feeling and cultural forms, 3) via social distribution of emotion along lines of class, gender, age, geographic and identity-formation (DeNora, 2011, p. 160). She argues further that within music sociology it is possible to conceptualise music as a means of ‘emotion construction’ that provides a non-cognitive basis for agency (organised action, feelings, being and awareness). However, Trehub, Hannon and Schachner (2011) take issue with the suggestion that music conveys discrete emotional messages, suggesting that the individual’s musical and life experiences influence responses.

### *The role of affect*

The role of affect in relation to motivation is relevant at this point as part of a more general discussion about emotional learning and predispositions to music. The dictionary definition of ‘affect’ is, “Emotion or desire, esp. as influencing behaviour or action” (OED). It is a powerful driver of an individual’s actions and can impact on motivation to engage with different activities.

Beliefs, emotions and attitudes about ourself can influence our motivation to learn. Our self-identity and perception as ‘musical,’ for example, can influence our overall engagement in music (Hallam, 2009; Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003). Our internal emotional responses underpin intrinsic motivation and can lead to pleasure and enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Custodero, 1999; Hallam, 2010). This in turn



can give rise to increased participation and interest that becomes integrated into our self-concept and identity. This forms a ‘positive affective circle’ in which self-concept is underpinned by enthusiasm and pleasure, which reinforces beliefs about self-identity and positive emotions. It would appear that by deriving pleasure from an experience, prompted by an emotional response, a self-concept can be deepened and beliefs and attitudes about one’s identity can be reinforced and strengthened (Hallam, 2010). Any signs of pleasure or enjoyment in engaging in musical activity will be observed in the final phase of this research when compared to two other parent- child activity groups in the Children’s Centre.

Clearly music and emotional learning are very closely linked, and there are inward and outward competencies required in relation to emotional intelligence. Early interactions convey emotional as well as social content and music has a strong part to play in the inward and outward understanding of emotions both individually and as part of a group. Conceiving of oneself as ‘musical’ and feeling pleasure from participating in music can reinforce and strengthen one’s self-concept. Social and emotional learning in early childhood occur within a cultural framework that surrounds and permeates the child; this is discussed in the following section.

### 2.3.3 Cultural learning

From the socio-cultural perspective Rogoff says,

“Humans develop through their changing participation in the socio-cultural activities of their communities, which also change.” (2003, p. 11)

These cultural processes are all around us and often involve taken-for-granted ways of doing things. They constitute a series of interconnected factors such as economic resources, family size, urbanization, thus one community's way of doing something may vary from another's: there is no one right way. Child rearing and the status of children in society may vary from community to community. Rogoff (2003) suggests that development from this perspective occurs according to cultural expectations. She describes as an example, different attitudes about a child's capability to look after another child. In the UK a child must legally be 14 years or older to do this, whereas in some communities it may be between 5-7 years (Rogoff 2003, p.4).

Cultural learning may be similar and different in various ways across communities and therefore it is not possible to generalise about what this learning comprises. However some fundamental developmental processes occur universally that enables cultural absorption to take place. Vygotsky argues that 'an interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one' (1978, p. 57), that is to say that a child's cultural development occurs first at the social level and then on the individual level. Through this internalization of cultural forms of behaviour there is a reconstruction at the inner, psychological level. He asserts that 'higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals' (ibid., p.57).

Children's Centres are designed to respond to the local needs and wishes of the community which they serve - therefore the musical activities that take place in a local Children's Centre may be based on unquestioned assumptions, "stemming from one's own community practices" (Rogoff, 2003, p11). It may be a 'taken-for-

granted' assumption that parent-child group music making should include certain repertoire and follow a particular format.

At a broad level, global trends of social change, migration and mixing of cultures may lead to discontinuities for some children across different aspects of their life. For some families the accepted practices of interactions with practitioners, perhaps attending a Children's Centre activity group such as a parent-child music group activity may require learning new ways of talking, acting and thinking (Maybin and Woodhead, 2003) that other individuals might find perfectly natural and easy, especially if the music selected uses a new language, the melodies and instruments are unfamiliar and the actions make no sense according to one's own family traditions.

- *"Culture isn't just what other people do.*
- *Understanding one's own cultural heritage, as well as other cultural communities, requires taking the perspective of people of contrasting backgrounds.*
- *Cultural practices fit together and are connected."*(Rogoff, 2003, p.11)

Rogoff (2003, p.130) suggests that 'experts' may stake claims for the right to determine child-rearing practices for example a health visitor may recommend feeding and sleeping routines to a parent for their young child. The Children's Centre may be viewed by parents as the 'hub' of expert knowledge about young children, their education and care. Attendance at group sessions at a Children's Centre may cause certain families to be cautious about the validity of their own parenting practices and look to the practitioners, or other parents to model what might be 'culturally' appropriate parenting in that setting. Some parents with young children may be located away from their own parents and may look to the community of the Children's Centre where 'experts' and peers meet together as a source of support and

for transmission of parenting practices. Both child and parent may be involved in social-cultural learning in their participation in group activities at the Children's Centre. Making the transition to parenthood as a social, cultural and emotional learning experience.

It is clear from the discussion in the previous sections that social, emotional and cultural learning are closely linked, and perhaps inseparable, and I should like to argue that music helps in cultural learning because of its ability to represent the traditions and values of a culture yet also to provide affective interaction between members of a group. This synthesis of the three domains of learning makes music a powerful medium for learning in early childhood. Music embodies values and beliefs of a culture in time and place, through its sound characteristics, its structure and organisation (Clarke et al., 2012).

Through the way that musical materials and practices are valued and used an individual or group may construct their identities (Hargreaves and Marshall, 2003; MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell, 2002), and their sense of gender and musical style preferences (Marshall and Shibazaki, 2012). Community practices help to understand people's use and transformation of cultural tools and technologies. Van Oers (2010) argues that play is also a cultural invention to explore cultural experiences and try out different actions without risk. He argues that enculturation happens for children through 'playful' participation in cultural practices (ibid., p.200).

The music group setting in the Children's Centre provides a rich environment for playful participation in the cultural practices that predominate, or are accepted or preferred in that location. Providing culturally diverse and appropriate musical material requires negotiation between participants and may not always include everyone. This exclusivity may be inadvertent.

The arguments made throughout this section about the inter-relatedness of these three domains of learning can be used to explore the purpose and remit of musical learning in early childhood and its role in the process of learning. This will be a focus of this thesis. Through looking closely at the particular context of a Children's Centre and parent-child participation in a group music activity, led by a professional, the subtle and diverse ways that children and adults learn and develop social, emotional and cultural expertise will be revealed through observation and consultation.

Part of understanding group music activity in the Children's Centre context requires some knowledge of musical development in early childhood and the benefits of music to other areas of learning and development. The following section considers this.

## **2.4 Musical development in early childhood**

The years before a child starts school are full of learning and development. Infancy and early childhood (in a typically developing child) sees physical and

developmental growth across all domains of intelligence. In the years before verbal proficiency how do children make sense of their world and how do they develop a musical understanding? These questions are relevant to my research as most of the children included in this work are preverbal, or are just beginning to use language. Gathering information from research literature about young children's thinking and musical development will assist in setting the scene for this research.

#### 2.4.1 Musical development of infants

Musical development is concerned with acquiring knowledge and experience of the elements of music: pitch, rhythm, timbre, tempo, form, melody, harmonic structure and dynamics. Research on early childhood musical development begins with 'before birth' studies. The foetus has the ability to hear from 30-35 weeks in utero (Lecanuet, 1996; Lecanuet and Schaal, 2002), and indeed pitch and timbre perception start in the womb (Parncutt, 2009; Särkämö, Tervaniemi, and Huotilainen, 2013). Music can be heard in the womb, and although the sounds are muffled (Woodward and Guidozzi, 1992), they have the ability to gain attention, and to then soothe and calm premature and newborn babies (Polverini-Rey, 1993; Standley, 1998) .

Infants' musical competencies in the first year of life have been the subject of laboratory-based research for many decades and have produced a body of convincing evidence of sound discrimination, preferences and competencies. Newborns have been shown to demonstrate cyclical hand movements fitting phrase divisions within a musical piece's cycle of tension-release (Hefer, Weintraub, and Cohen, 2009). Three day-old babies recognise and prefer their mother's voice to any other (DeCasper and Fifer, 1980) and in the first year of life continue to show a preference for their

mother's and father's voices (Nakata and Trehub, 2004; O'Neill, Trainor, and Trehub, 2001). Infants (aged 5, 8 and 11 months) indicated a clear preference for an unaccompanied version of an unknown song to one with instrumental accompaniment and voice (Ilari and Sundara, 2009). Infants between 4-13 months showed a preference for happy voice quality over vocal mode (speech or singing). The expressiveness and greater acoustic variability that characterised happy singing or infant-directed speech was found to be the most significant contributor to infant attention regardless of the infant's age (Corbeil, Trehub, and Peretz, 2013).

Using laboratory-based experimental designs often based on head-turn procedures or modified versions thereof, very young children have demonstrated musical processing skills. Using an adapted head-turn procedure, the use of eye-movement preference was developed and used to demonstrate that infants as young as two months could remember a short melody and discriminate it from a similar one (Plantinga and Trainor, 2009). Infants rapidly developed their ability to respond to mismatched pitches, and by four months old they responded as quickly as an adult to a changes in pitch patterns (Chao, Hotson, and Trainor, 2009). Six month-old infants were able to process melodic information by relative pitch distances just like adults, yet their cortical activity differs significantly (Plantinga and Trainor, 2005; Tew, Fujioka, He, and Trainor, 2009). Infants between eight and eleven months were able to discriminate changes in a melodic contour when it was transposed, or intervals were varied (Trehub, Bull, and Thorpe, 1984; Trehub, Thorpe, and Morrongiello, 1987). At eleven-months old infants were better able to detect a syllable change in a sung sequence rather than in a spoken one, demonstrating the importance of infant-directed speech (Lebedeva and Kuhl, 2010).

This is evidence of the newborns' and infants' organisation and meaning-making ability that demonstrates listening and responding to sound phenomena, coupled with a preference for the sounds that emanate from the person upon whom the child most depends. The thinking processes involved in hearing are somehow interlinked with connections to important others from the very beginning of life. Human survival depends on strong affiliative bonds between adult and child for care and nurture in infancy. Fox (2000) highlights the importance of the parent as the child's first music educator, and the educationalist Froebel also identified mothers and music in the primary education of the child: he devised the 'mother's songs and games' for this purpose (Froebel, 1920).

My research project seeks to add insight into the parent-child realm of music-making by focusing on parent and child making music together as part of a group and by seeking to identify any benefits for both parent and child in their participation. This will add to knowledge of individual dyadic interaction by taking place in the 'community' context; this raises issues of belonging, ritual and performance as well as the effects of being part of a group on self-esteem and confidence. Most of the literature discussed above has focused on infants in the first year of life, and is valuable in demonstrating that musicality is an essential element of thriving from the beginning of life. It must therefore be important in the ensuing years as the processes of hearing and listening become established and develop with the preference for melodic information suggesting a predisposition towards musical material. Additional research has revealed that musical experiences can benefit children throughout the early childhood stage in a number of ways and these will be briefly discussed in the following section.



#### 2.4.2 Musical development of young children

The musical development of toddlers is an under-researched area of music psychology, perhaps partly because it is difficult to keep toddlers sitting down and they are not yet sufficiently articulate to participate in interviews or questionnaires. Observation studies are helpful for this stage of development as much can be gained from looking closely at young children's behaviour. The Pillsbury Foundations Studies (Moorhead and Pond, 1941) of the 1940s remain a seminal work of observation of children's musical behaviours (from two to six years old).

Moorhead and Pond found that physical movement and speech were closely interlinked with musical play (the speech becoming musical in form). They found (as in studies reviewed in previous sections) that to separate musical learning from other learning was impossible, and that experimentation and repetition of action-patterns gave rise eventually to their coordination into meaningful ideas. They found that invented 'chants' featured as part of children's play. These chants were based on a repeated recitation note with melodic inflections for emphasis. Chants were different from the song-singing which occurred frequently when children were moving; these songs were typically experiments with melody, often the same words repeated each time with a different melody, representing a free and flexible approach akin to plainsong (Moorhead and Pond, 1941, pp. 12-13).

Hargreaves (1986) describes these early 'outline' or spontaneous songs as similar to the 'tadpole-man' type drawings that Piaget suggests occur in the pre-operational, second stage of development. Moorhead and Pond noted that adults' recognition of children's musical products were subject to an arbitrary standard of their own, and

that they may reject most of what might be considered children's real music (Flohr, 2010; Moorhead and Pond, 1941, p. 4). Children needed the freedom to pursue their own interests, to experiment and repeat in order to produce their own music.

Rhythmic vocal communication seemed to accompany group socialisation around a common play activity. Moorhead and Pond's research focused on the need for adults to be sensitive to a child's urge for expression and growth and to then provide help in acquiring the technical skills needed.

Delalande and his team of researchers (Cornara, 2009; Delalande and Cornara, 2010; Filippa, 2009; Nuti and Filippa, 2009) studied young (10 – 37 months) children's musical behaviours in several nurseries over three years. Most of the studies involved the observation of children exploring instruments alone in an experimental situation. Of course if a child is alone her music making is limited to her own constructions, and the interactive element of music making with another is denied them. These studies therefore only measure one aspect of young children's musical behaviour. The studies are based on a Piagetian process of invention in the 'ontogenesis of musical conducts' (Delalande, 1993). The stages that they identified were: a chance gesture produces an agreeable sound and sensation, the child is curious and her interest is sparked. She wants to repeat the experience, makes the gesture again, but from a certain age (about seven months) she makes changes to maintain her curiosity and interest. This final stage they identify as 'exploration' and the beginnings of musical invention/ musical idea or sound configuration (Delalande and Cornara, 2010, p. 259).

Moving away from an experimental design, Young (2003b) found with a grounded theory, interpretive approach to her study of three- and four-year-old children that she could observe and time musical interchanges between child and adult or child alone. She found that playing with instruments was sustained for the longest time between a child and a familiar adult, and playing alone for the shortest: her findings also revealed that the longest sessions were those where the contributions were well-timed and coordinated from both parties. Her suggestion is that in the earliest years, music making is strongly social-musical, and comprised of intentions that are both dialogic and interactional. The social-musical component to music making may well be significant to the setting I have chosen for this research as adults and children engage together in the activity. It will be interesting to observe what the benefits might be in a more structured group music activity for children's learning and development when their parents participate with them.

An experimental study supports these findings. Gerry, Unrau, and Trainor (2012) found that six months of active participation in music accelerated not only culture-specific knowledge of Western tonality (Hannon and Trainor, 2007) but also increased development of pre-linguistic communicative gestures and social behaviours when compared to a control group who were assigned to a passive music experience. Even though this study was with much younger children (6 months of age) participants as compared to Young's (2003b) study above, the use of appropriate pedagogical approaches was highlighted as being vital to the success of the active music experience. The active music class used a small, defined and often repeated repertoire of lullabies, action songs and nursery rhymes. Both infants and parents played percussion instruments and parents were encouraged to sing to their

child and had a CD to use at home.

Thus, although humans appear to have musical intelligence in that sound phenomena are heard and interpreted as music from the start of life, the interaction and emotional connectedness with a primary carer is equally important in the listening preferences of infants and this social aspect of music experience persists into toddler and pre-school-hood. Regular practical music making can affect the structure of the brain over time: practising musicians have improved auditory and motor processing skills that relate to music making. In order to develop the skills necessary to begin the journey that leads to instrumental music practice, interactions with others play a fundamental part. The development of musical thinking requires observant, responsive and sensitive adults able to recognise, support and value children's attempts at original music making as well as nurturing those motor and auditory skills that are required for music re-creation.

Young children's thinking does not happen in a vacuum; parents, peers, carers and practitioners assist in the development of thinking skills that can give rise to divergent, creative or 'possibility' thinking in all areas of learning and development (Craft, 2002; Craft, Jeffrey, and Leibling, 2001; Fumoto, Robson, Greenfield, and Hargreaves, 2012).

### 2.4.3 The transfer benefits of music

Music has been found to be helpful beyond infancy across a number of domains of learning. Firstly, in young children's spatial-temporal reasoning. Bilhartz, Bruhn, and Olson, (1999) tested an experimental and a control group of matched four- to five-year-old children for steady beat, rhythmic pattern and vocal pitch, as well as a series of Stanford Binet tests (a popular cognitive assessment testing procedure used to measure intelligence or IQ), including a bead memory test. After the experimental group had received active music training classes for 30 weeks, significant differences were found between the two groups; the music group performing better in all the 'music-related' tasks and the bead memory test – in which children reproduced strings of beads that varied in colour and shape having viewed an image of the beads. Six months of music training also gave rise to an improvement in spatial-temporal reasoning in three year olds (Gromko and Poorman, 1998). Processing sound has been associated with cognitive sequencing ability, and disturbances in sequencing skills of serial-order information have been found in deaf children. It is suggested that sound provides an auditory scaffolding for time and serial-order information (Conway, Pisoni, and Kronenberger, 2009).

Schellenberg and Weiss, (2013) and Schellenberg, (2005) found that groups of preschool children who studied either piano or voice classes demonstrated significant improvements in IQ scores compared with those children in control groups. However, the children allocated to a drama control group scored higher in social skills. These studies also showed strong correlations between parental involvement and post-treatment scores, providing evidence of the importance of the intersubjective nature of music making as well as of the cognitive improvements it promotes.

Benefits to speech and language development are often anecdotal reasons given for including music with young children. The research literature points to gains in phonemic awareness, speech perception and language acquisition. Longitudinal studies with young children at the top end of early childhood (aged eight years) showed that those that attended music training were significantly better able to identify speech segments than those who attended a painting group (Chobert, François, Velay, and Besson, 2012; François and Schön, 2011; François, Chobert, Besson, and Schön, 2012).

Music instruction over four months improved phonemic segmentation fluency in a group of kindergarten children as compared to a control group (Eastlund Gromko, 2005). Musical perception skills were found to be associated with phonological processing and early reading ability in pre-school children and music has also been found to be beneficial for early word use and social and emotional development (Anvari, Trainor, Woodside, and Levy, 2002; Bolduc, 2008). Rhythmic ability was found to be related to phonological awareness and word recognition skills in kindergarten children (Moritz, Yampolsky, Papadelis, Thomson, and Wolf, 2013).

Over nearly a three-year period Forrester (2010) studied one child's naturalistic, music-related behaviour. Around 30 examples of musical behaviours were chosen for analysis and the 36 months were divided into three time periods: under 2 years, between 2 and 2.5 years, and from 2.5 to 3 years 10 months (Forrester, 2010, p. 136). Over these time periods three distinct phases of development were discovered: First was *social-affective* – demonstrated by sound imitation and rhythmic rocking,

followed by '*song-word*' play - this was exemplified by musical independence and word-association song play, and finally *narrative-related musicality* – the examples given are of frequent spontaneous song-play with narrative song-dialogue interdependence (Forrester, 2010, p.137). Findings suggested that as children are learning language they hear words as sounds, musical play and word play are interlinked. Indeed in the second of Forrester's time periods musical repetition seemed to serve as "word-production" scaffolding and in the final period it became part of the characterisation and realisation of narrative structures: musical behaviours were used for different purposes than music making for its own sake (ibid, p.150).

Correlations have been found between number concept development and the performed accuracy of rhythm patterns in groups of children aged two to four years (Habegger, 2010), suggesting linkages between motor development, numeric skill, working memory and conservation capacity.

In the domain of emotional learning, practical music activity was found to enhance non-verbal skills and communication of emotion (Boone and Cunningham, 2001): music can entrain and synchronise social partners' movements in a joint activity, encouraging social behaviour (Kirschner and Tomasello, 2009, 2010). Hallam (2010, pp. 791-817) outlines the many ways that individuals benefit from affective experiences in music; expressing emotion (Brown and Sax, 2013); developing personal and social skills such as awareness of others, well-being, and confidence as well as transfer benefits to other learning areas. Music group interaction over the course of a school year with a group of 8-11 year old children showed increased emotional empathy scores after the study as compared to those at the beginning, and

they also obtained higher scores than the control group. These results suggest that music group interaction develops social-emotional capacities in children. The group shares a sense of empathy through several characteristics including; *entrainment*, *shared intentionality and intersubjectivity* (Rabinowitch, Cross, and Burnard, 2013, p. 485). Although the children were older in this study, it will be interesting to investigate the same topic with younger children and their parents together in a music group interaction environment.

The effectiveness of a 'school readiness' music programme was assessed in terms of children's social-emotional readiness to move from preschool to kindergarten (Ritblatt, Longstreth, Hokoda, Cannon, and Weston, 2013). 102 children were assigned to two school-readiness music programmes and two control groups which followed non-music school readiness programmes. Those in the music groups improved in social skills on the measurement of cooperation, interaction and social independence scales to a greater extent than did those in the non-music groups. The results indicated that using a music-based curriculum facilitated learning of social skills that were helpful for making transitions to pre-school.

It will be interesting to discover whether school readiness features in the rationale for music groups in Children's Centres, as this is a government priority for early childhood interventions. Establishing the motivations behind offering musical activities for families will be a helpful starting point for this research as yet there is only anecdotal evidence of the perceived benefits of music groups in Children's Centres which are mainly related to benefitting language skills, and socialisation. Although it is clear that music has been shown to benefit other areas of learning and



development, particularly in the areas of spatial-temporal reasoning and phonological awareness, it is unclear whether these benefits lasted over time and whether the children in the experimental groups achieved better academic results over the long term.

This section has demonstrated a newborn's enjoyment of melodic vocalisations, especially those of her/his parents. Song and musical play in parent-child interaction have been found to take place cross-culturally (Trehub and Trainor, 1998; Unyk, Trehub, Trainor and Schellenberg, 1992). Part of this research will compare singing activities with art and outdoor activities for parents and children to see what if any are the specific benefits of the musical activities. The next section discusses the development of singing: this is central to musical activities in early childhood, and it is therefore important to understand its development through the early childhood stage.

#### 2.4.4 The development of singing in early childhood

Tafari's (2008) longitudinal research study of children exposed to music from before birth to six years old focused on their musical development and in particular their ability to sing in tune. Her hypothesis was "that all children would be able to learn to sing correctly (that is, to sing in tune) over the period of the six years, under certain conditions" (2008, p. 83). These conditions were that music would be included from the sixth month of prenatal life and that singing and listening should be part of the family environment, shared with praise and affection.

The researchers identified moments when the children pitched an interval 'in tune' and describe the moment; 'the first baby to sing since the research began two years

previously' when a child (18 months old) responded with their name - perfectly in tune - in the 'hello' song part of the group music session. However, an analysis of the children's vocalisations over the research study until that point had identified a range of vocal responses to their mother's singing with them. These included glissandi; one or more sounds in tune on a vowel sometimes imitating parts of the mother's song; spoken syllables or words; sung syllables that reproduce correctly one or two intervals of the song; and sung phrases or a sequence of pitch intervals, produced with some syllables or fragments of songs. Tafuri admitted that interpretation of this material was not easy (2008, p.61), yet it was interesting that none of this material was defined as singing, since the first example of singing was defined as the moment when a child sang in tune in what was considered the 'correct' place in a known song.

Parents were encouraged to record their children's singing at home and there were protocols for these recordings for the various phases of the research. Tafuri noticed that the children derived pleasure when expressing themselves in song as creators as well as imitators (p.63). Classification of this data used Welch's (1997) 'model of vocal pitch-matching development' to identify how 'in tune' the singing examples were. Children varied in the accuracy of their 'singing in tune' ability but the average scores improved in song singing as the children aged (2006, p.66-67). This study gives a detailed account of children's vocal development in terms of gaining accuracy in singing known songs and reproduction of pitch-intervals with increasing accuracy. The intervention clearly was of benefit to the children's singing and musical participation. Is 'in tune' singing the only worthwhile singing, however?

Findings from the Sounds of Intent project and the resulting framework (Ockelford, Welch, Jewell-Gore, Cheng, Vogiatzoglou, Himonides, 2011, Ockelford, Welch, Zimmermann, Himonides, 2005) suggest that children's (with PMLD - profound and multiple learning disabilities) first experiences with sound may have little or no meaning, and proactive sound responses (vocalisations or with instruments) may be accidental: the framework suggests that sound making becomes more intentional as awareness of sound and silence evolve and the use of sound making becomes useful in interaction and communication. Music making with others involves copying and anticipation of sound patterns.

Children's early vocalisations and spontaneous songs, mentioned by Moog, Hargreaves, Welch and others (Barrett, 2006; Bjorkvold, 1992; Hargreaves, 1986; Moog, 1976; Welch, 2006a) can develop into what Moog called 'pot-pourri' songs, in which the fragments of learned songs which appear in places may be serving a cognitive, emotional or social purpose for the child. They have been described already in this chapter as akin to 'tadpole-man' drawings, and they may constitute an important part of children's real music in early childhood, that may be dismissed or ignored by adult teachers or observers, as they do not conform to adult notions of singing/copying a song correctly. These seemingly random fragments of songs that appear may be part of thinking, remembering or play processes (Dean, 2011) that is developmentally helpful or therapeutic for self-regulation of mood state. Accuracy in pitch reproduction may be less important to the child than to any adult monitoring their singing.

Niland (2005) argued that music education programmes for young children centred on songs and singing allowed them to participate as and when they felt ready.

Barrett's (2006) longitudinal, ethnographic study explored the ways in which young children's (4-5 years old) invented songs showed examples of concepts suggested by Dissanayake (2000) - of mutuality and belonging, finding and making meaning, developing competence and elaborating (2006, p.209). Through her findings Barrett argued that group music making, with a focus on ensemble performance, is a good vehicle for achieving many extra-musical developmental aims, although invented song-making has the important role of encouraging elaboration, which allows music to be a creative practice rather than a re-creative one.

#### 2.4.5 The action song

Action songs feature in this research project as the main repertoire of the music group selected for the final study. These songs include; "schematized sequences of obligatory bodily action" (Eckerdal and Merker, 2009, p. 250), which might include for example; knee bouncing, clapping or finger/hand games applied in a predictable sequence that allows the children to interact in a predetermined manner with their carer.

As Eckerdal and Merker point out, these songs' purpose in children's development is ambiguous. Often regarded as useful in teaching language skills (Goswami and Bryant, 1990), the language of many of these songs seems rather ill-suited to the task: often the language is archaic, or nonsensical. The musical purpose does not seem to be the priority either, with metrical and melodic errors not seeming to matter in rendition. What appears to be most important is the adult-child interactive

component. The purpose they concluded was to encourage the child to actively participate – adults often praising the child’s every effort to join-in. Eckerdal and Merker suggest that this participation represents entry into the ritual level of human culture - clapping, for example is a ritual sign of approval. The following of these ‘rules’ is not learning for life but learning for just the confines of the action song, whose primary importance it seems is to ‘perform’ it with no instrumental end in sight. The action song, the researchers suggest, is of developmental significance as it marks a break with our ape heritage and signifies truly human, ritual culture.

The action song provides a vehicle for ‘symmetry’ of interaction as participation in the sequences of actions could be seen as part of ‘communicative co-regulation’, an implicit element of mother-infant dyadic relationship, as defined by Fogel (2000) albeit directed by the musical material. The action song can be classified as a ‘shared conventional’ communication frame:

“Mother and child are referring to a common focus through conventional means. Conventions are culturally defined non-literal actions (idiosyncratically shared among members of the dyad or shared among members of a culture). E.g. giving and taking games; peekaboo; brushing the doll’s hair or feeding the doll” (Camaioni, Aureli, Bellagamba, and Fogel, 2003, p. 4).

Fogel has researched mother-infant face-to-face interactions in minute detail, finding that mother-infant facial and vocal acts tended to be organized in runs, demonstrating the same non-random start-interval distribution between the dyad. There was a high incidence of co-occurrence between mother and infant indicating mutual and

symmetrical contribution to the interaction (Fogel, 1977). Repetition was important to sustain gaze and enjoyment, suggesting that development happens in a social context. (The child in this study was initially six weeks old and was video-taped ten times over a seven-week period). A later study (Camaioni et al., 2003) investigated children between 10 and 24 months of age – the period in which their communication typically moves from signals (vocal and gestural) to symbols (words and symbolic gestures). Mother-child communication frames were coded for location, postural co-orientation, topic, level or focus. The final component of level or focus can be characterized as:

- **Shared attentional:** mother and child look at or act together on the same focus e.g. tapping, shaking or combining objects.
- **Shared conventional:** mother and child are referring to a common focus through conventional means - e.g. giving and taking games, peekaboo, brushing a doll's hair shared
- **Symbolic:** mother and child share arbitrary meaning-referent relationships, talking on a common topic. e.g. pointing and naming games, alphabet or number games, storytelling, singing together.
- **Non-shared:** mother and child are looking, acting, talking about different foci

(Camaioni et al., 2003, p. 4).

A further study of mother-child communication patterns developed a five-category coding schedule for communication behaviours:

- **Symmetry:** there is mutual engagement between the partners in participating in a communicative process; both are involved in communicative process e.g. peekaboo game
- **Asymmetry:** the contribution in creating new features in communication is asymmetrical between the partners. There is a common focus in the action, but one of the partners proposes more innovations e.g. mother walking fingers on infant's tummy whilst infant watches closely.
- **Unilateral** (One-sided), in which one of the two partners regulates his/her own activity upon the other without any form of shared action, but the non-acting partner show interest and is helpful. e.g. child sucks thumb whilst mother tries to get a smile by tickling
- **Disruptive:** there is an attempt at mutual innovation that stops the action; a retire or rejection, incoherent innovation towards the shared action. e.g. mother goes to remove thumb from child's mouth
- **Uninvolved:** the partners are not co-regulated even if possible. No communication will. e.g. mother looks at the camera, child chews his shirt (Hsu and Fogel, 2001, p. 94).

Findings from this study suggested that infant vocal communication arises through the co-created relational processes between infant and parent during social communication; that sound and vocal communication are inter-related systems and; that communication is influenced by the dynamic, moment-by-moment process of interaction between parent and child.

Piras and Addessi (2008) made use of Hsu and Fogel's (2001) relational coding system in a study of a mother and her three-year old son's musical interactions over a weekend at home. Eight minutes of interaction were analysed with results showing that *asymmetry* was most often encountered, with the mother providing new musical stimulus, or *symmetry* (2 minutes of the eight analysed). *Unilateral* and *Disruption* occurred due to interruption by other people, and there was no record of *Uninvolved* during the eight minutes selected for analysis (Addessi, 2008; 2009). This demonstrates that the coding system is suitable for measuring musical interaction with an older preschool child and therefore it was considered a possible measurement tool to adapt for use within the group parent-child music making sessions as part of my research.

#### 2.4.6 The role of ritual in parent-child group music making

The human ritual culture of which Eckerdal and Merker suggest that action songs form a part has been the subject of research. Turner (Turner, 1974, 1982, 1986, 2009) built on the work of Arnold van Gennep (Van Gennep, 1960), whose studies of initiation rites in tribal societies gave rise to the distinguishing of three phases in a rite of passage: *separation*, *transition*, and *incorporation* with 'thresholds' or *limen* to be passed through between each phase. The *separation* phase has a demarcated time and space with a 'rite' that changes the quality of time or constructs a cultural reality that is 'out of time'. It can include symbolic behaviour, which helps to detach participants from their previous social statuses. In this space and time participants can be liberated from societal obligations (Turner, 1982, pp. 24-25). Sutton-Smith calls this; 'anti-structure' (1972), describing the dissolution of normative social structure that takes place in children's game-play. Turner takes these two notions of



liminality and ‘anti-structure’ forward from tribal societies to encompass any situation where groups of people may be; “...subverted from their duties and rights into an atmosphere of *communitas*.” (Turner, 1982, p. 45), He relates ‘*communitas*’ to a state of ‘flow’, the latter happening in the individual and the former occurring amongst groups of people. These concepts may be helpful in articulating what may be possible in the parent-child music group activity in the Children’s Centre.

Welch (2006c) sees enculturation and generative skill development as playing a significant part in the changes in singing behaviour that occur as a child ages. He comments on the fact that a young child is a member of several social groups and that each may influence individual musical behaviour and development. The family can have a key role, he suggests, and the parents’ enjoyment and participation in music when they were a child can have a strong impact on the musical environment that is created at home. When parents attend a music session with their children the music experience together may be perhaps more easily shared at home as a result: this socio-cultural aspect will be an interesting one to explore in my research.

The cultural history of a family across generations can contribute to a child’s social, emotional and cultural musical experiences, which originate with the child’s primary caregiver and the earliest musical interactions: this is the subject of the following section.

## **2.5 Musical interaction**

This section addresses the topic of musicality in interaction. This was touched on in in connection with social, emotional learning in early childhood, and research in the field is reviewed and discussed in more detail here. The earliest interactions between

mother and baby have a musical component that allows inter- subjectivity, co-regulation and attunement; these interactions have been termed ‘Communicative Musicality’ (Trevarthen, 1999; Trevarthen and Malloch, 2000). This area of research has been an important influence on contemporary early childhood music education for its promotion of parent-child bonding and emphasis on language acquisition. There is a great deal of research literature about music and infants during the first year of life, as well as a rich seam of literature about music and the preschool, four year-old child: my own review of the literature has revealed that studies of children up to eight years old have had the keywords ‘early childhood’ attached to them. There is, however, a paucity of research literature on musical development with children aged two-four years old, and the majority of the child participants in my research are between the ages of one and three years. In this section a review of the literature that is specifically pertinent to this age group will be included.

### 2.5.1 Communicative musicality

The term ‘communicative musicality’ was coined by Malloch and Trevarthen (Trevarthen, 1999; Trevarthen and Malloch, 2000), and this was an integral part of Trevarthen’s concept of Intrinsic Motive Pulse (IMP) which he describes as the origin of musicality, or the psychobiological source of music. The rhythmic expressions, prior to expressions of music, between infant and parent are interpreted as motivations of the IMP and this in turn motivates movement, consciously directs actions and coordinates shared social experience. This rhythm underlying coordinated communicative behaviours led Malloch to also consider the pitch contours of the interchanges. Thus communicative musicality helps define mother-baby interaction - not what is typically thought of as ‘music’ but rather an innate

human ability to appreciate and produce musically co-ordinated ‘narratives’ of expression and emotion (Malloch and Trevarthen, 2010, p. 4). These protoconversations allow for sustained shared empathetic meaning which follows a ‘musical-type’ structure of: introduction, development, climax and resolution.

The theory has much research literature to support it. Infants prefer their mother’s speech with a raised intonation and sing-song quality (Fernald, 1992), during musical play, infant-mother pairs adjust their timed interactions to the metrical structure of songs (Shifres and Español, 2004). Infants have been found to influence the manner in which their parents sing to them, (Nakata and Trehub, 2011; Nakata and Trehub, 2004) raising their pitch and slowing their tempo when singing a lullaby to their child as compared with when they sing the lullaby away from their child (Trehub and Trainor, 1998; Trehub, Unyk, Kamenetsksy, Hill, Trainor, Henderson and Saraza, 1997; Unyk, Trehub, Trainor, and Schellenberg, 1992).

Van Puyvelde, Vanfletern, Loots, Deschuyffeleer, Vick, Jacquet, and Verhelst. (2010) found tonal synchrony between mother and infant in a sample of mothers and their 3-month-old infants. Analyses of mother’s singing to their infants demonstrated that the hierarchical structure of the songs were shown by synchronous behaviour with the beat to which the infant attuned. This ‘songese’ is thought to assist infants’ cognitive development and regulation of emotions, by highlighting the temporal structure and leaving time for the infants to react (Longhi, 2009). Longhi, Pickett and Hargreaves (2013) have found that young children in hospital experienced a significant lowering of both heart rate and pain levels when lullabies were sung to them compared to hearing familiar stories read aloud by their parents, proving that it

is not just parental attention but the music and singing to a child that makes a difference.

Young (2005a), although strongly supporting Trevarthen et al.'s work, criticises the way the term communicative musicality has been used in early childhood practice as a useful ideology to reinforce a standard of parenting behaviour which leaves little room for diversity. In her view the strongly musical attributes of the theory with their concomitant structured, predictable sequences of time-based phrasing and heightened emotions and affectivity have been harnessed not to promote musical activities but to encourage interaction for the purposes of promoting attachment and language acquisition (Young, 2005a, p. 293).

On the other hand using musical interventions as a tool for working with mothers can be beneficial for young children's development and capacity for learning. Maternal postnatal depression can affect the intersubjective interaction process and lead to disorganised attachment. Studies of infants at four months, and again at 12-months, interacting face to face with parent or stranger revealed that the timing patterns of the four month olds were precursors of 12-month old behaviour and suggested a fundamental dyadic timing system that informs all relational theories of development (Jaffe, Beebe, Feldstein, Crown, Jasnow, Rochat and Stern, 2001). Disorganised, insecure attachment at 12 months could be predicted by micro-analyses of their 4-month old interaction behaviour where there was lowered maternal contingent coordination and failed affective correspondence (Beebe, Lachmann, Jaffe, et al., 2012; Beebe, Lachmann, Markese, et al., 2012; Beebe et al., 2011). Timing matters in the adjustments needed to accommodate infants' perceptual needs and preferences.

The facial expressions that accompany melodic infant-directed speech are used to judge the emotional intentions of the interaction (Trehub, Hannon, and Schachner, 2011). Maternal depression can interfere with facial expressiveness so that infants miss out not only in the perfectly timed interchanges but also the facial clues that communicate the emotion of the message. The interactive process is holistic and multi-modal, and the social-emotional and developmental domains are all affected by maternal low mood. This seems to highlight the tremendous importance of helping mothers with low mood to develop secure attachment behaviours and well-timed interactions with their young children. Music is fundamentally supportive and helpful in this regard and the work of Children's Centres with families experiencing crises of this sort can, and do readily include musical ways of interaction to support such families.

Much of the research included in this section has influenced not only music therapy practice but also the ways in which some parent-child music groups are organised, planned and delivered, with activities that aim to build secure attachments through close parent-child interaction songs and games that require eye contact and tactile stimulation. This approach relies on the maternal capacity to enter into the reciprocal flow of the musical exchanges perhaps hinting at an ideology of motherhood that not every mother can live up to.

Street (2006), in her doctoral thesis on ‘the role of singing within mother-infant interactions’ found that mothers gave mixed messages about singing when interviewed. Over half the sample (n=100) agreed that they felt good when they could let go when they sing, around half felt good when singing with others yet over half preferred to sing when others could not hear them and agreed that they had not got a singing voice. Although they could derive pleasure and benefit from singing they lacked confidence in their ability to do so. Much of the singing with their infants was performed intuitively, in private, with mothers changing lyrics to suit their needs (often to help ease irksome child care duties). However, they considered this sort of singing to be insignificant. Although the children in my study are older, it is helpful to understand that parents’ perceptions about the benefits of music may not be borne out in the way in which they participate in the group activity. Inhibition and lack of confidence in their singing ability may limit their performance.

### 2.5.2 Young children’s musicality

In ‘Music with the Under Fours’ (2003a), Young describes toddler behaviour as:

“ The overwhelming need to play with and discover the potential of all that is around them, their spontaneity and unpredictability, can create new demands for the adults who care for them” (2003, p.50).

They gain physical and vocal skills rapidly and like to repeat movements and actions over and over again to extend their skill development. The close, two-way interactions of babyhood are elaborated and developed in this stage with peekaboo and more boisterous bouncing songs and games developing between carer and child.

Custodero (2005) investigated observable indicators of 'flow' experience in young children across four different age-groups: 7-23 months, 25-30 months, five-six years, six-eight years. Five key issues emerged, namely; 1) A trajectory of observed self-assignment (or self-initiated activity), 2) the importance of musical structure for infants and toddlers, 3) the role of gestures, 4) the character of musical transformations, and 5) the salience of adult awareness and changing roles of peers (Custodero, 2005, p. 202). Custodero found that the youngest children used self-correction as they anticipated the phrase structure in a peekaboo game using scarves. Self-monitoring of action sequences (without music) had only been found with three year-olds previously, and it was felt that the perception of musical structure facilitated precocious cognitive skill. Anticipation of musical cues was especially associated with movement (Custodero, 2005, pp. 202-206).

Barrett (2011) undertook a three-year longitudinal study to explore how children aged between 18-48 months built on their experiences of communicative musicality. Over a 12-month period a narrative account of one 2 year-old child's engagement with invented and known song material demonstrated that both were used by the child to perform and enact many ways of being; through musical stories and storytelling. Barrett suggests that the music was part of constructing her sense of self over this period.

The tempi of songs influence the synchronization abilities of children aged between 18-36 months. When the tempo was 'comfortable' for the children, they clapped or marched in time even if the song is being heard for the first time (Retra, 2011).

A small qualitative study (Arculus, 2011) of what two to three year old peers find funny and how their ensuing playfulness is expressed in musical modes of voice play, movement, and rhythm, found that physical play involving: chasing-mirroring, voice and word play predominated. Simple conversations with practitioners led to the emergence of word-play games, this was also found in Forrester's (2010) longitudinal case study.

In terms of singing development, Tafuri (2008) suggests that from one year old children start to imitate adults, at first with a few syllables and then with fragments of the song: she recommends the use of echo songs to encourage this. By two years old they can sing entire songs that they know if the adult starts them off (Tafuri, 2008, pp. 140-141). By around two and a half years the children are able to play with words and have fun changing them if demonstrated by an adult first. The children in Tafuri's study were from homes in which parents were prepared to take part in research over six years, which shows a considerable commitment to music. My own experience would suggest that having fun with changing words is dependent on the linguistic skills of the children, and that in certain situations this would not be possible until nursery age or beyond (four or five years old).

Young (2003a) advocates small group or one-to-one singing opportunities in which the adult can guide the tempo and select repertoire that enables children to participate fully, highlighting the requirement of a skilled and attuned practitioner who knows the indicators of emerging musical behaviours and how to extend them successfully. Her observations of 'circle time' group music with carers and toddlers in a daycare setting revealed that children often lagged behind the leader in singing. Ends of



musical phrases become key moments to join in. For example; ‘star’ and ‘are’ at the end of the first two phrases of ‘twinkle, twinkle’, or regular recurring key phrases such as; ‘ee-i, ee-i, oh’. Bouncing, wriggling and movement accompanied much of the participation. She noticed that new children needed to watch many times before being able to participate in an active way (2003a, pp. 62-63).

Some qualitative studies found that singing is used in several ways by children in this age/stage range, as a source of emotional knowledge (Vist, 2011). Children were found to sing with a key-person (the early years practitioner nominated to be the child’s named carer) at transition times in the nursery as parents were leaving in the morning, so as to express safety and affiliation on the part of the nursery practitioners and to show their awareness of and availability to the children as a secure base (Halle, 2011).

Young’s (2004) studies of young children’s (18-36 months) spontaneous vocalisations at free play and at home with their parents found that when practitioners used song playfully with dramatisation (as parents might do at home) children spontaneously vocalised and repeated songs.

As children start to develop and use their gross motor skills it appears that music becomes smoothly incorporated into movement play. As language development and its use increases so musical play with words becomes more elaborate. Children utilise music in ways that support their growing skills in other areas: it enhances their enjoyment and enriches their experiences. Invented songs and vocalisations are used to regulate emotion, to narrate and provide a soundtrack for free play (sometimes in a

private world) and to connect with others, and sometimes simply for no other purpose than enjoyment.

A cross-cultural, mixed-methods study of four-five year old children in Australia and Hong Kong (Yim and Ebbeck, 2009) revealed significant differences between children's cultural contexts and their preferences for group musical activities. Dancing and moving was the most preferred musical activity in both groups yet differences between the groups were found in singing, listening and playing instruments that revealed some possible cultural influences: these included Karaoke, listening to music as part of daily routine, and access to instruments (Yim and Ebbeck, 2009, p. 105). What became clear was that the nursery settings in Hong Kong provided opportunities for a variety of musical experiences for the children that the Australian nurseries did not. The children's cultural worlds and preferences were influenced by the musical provision in their nursery settings.

Musical interactions in the toddler years comprise invention and augmentation of the 'communicative musicality' experiences of infancy. Copying, playfulness and movement characterise this stage of improvisatory music making. Actively participating in songs is now beginning, with joining in at key moments. The musical culture within childcare settings can provide opportunities for enriching children's musical experiences and cultivating their musical development. Music is found to be helpful in regulating mood, and with helping with feelings of insecurity at transition times during a child's daily routines. Some of these social, cultural and emotional aspects may be relevant to the findings in my research. The next section turns to those musical interactions that develop as part of early childhood practice.

### 2.5.3 Early childhood music practice

It will be useful to review literature that relates to non-musicians' use of music in early childhood as Children's Centre practitioners may be involved in leading or using music as part of their work with families and children.

#### (I) Non-musician practitioners

A study of primary school trainee teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in teaching the National Curriculum (Hallam, Burnard, Robertson, Saleh, Davies, Rogers and Kokatsaki, 2009) revealed that although the majority of the teachers felt confident to teach most elements of the curriculum, only about half were confident in teaching music. Instrumentalists were significantly more confident than those who did not play instruments, and the majority of participants felt that more time should have been given to training in music, although they praised its quality. A further study of early childhood pre-service teachers' views about music (Kim and Kemple, 2011) revealed that stronger beliefs about the importance and benefits of music were correlated with participants' more accurate knowledge of musical terms. Three teachers were selected to participate in further in-depth interviews, findings related to the benefits of music to supplementing other aspects of learning that would help in achieving success in school, but did not refer to the value of music in its own right. Only one of the three teachers interviewed believed in using music as an active tool for child development (Kim and Kemple, 2011, p. 140). Recommendations from the study included in-service training in both music activities and in subject knowledge to help increase confidence levels.

A further study of university students studying to become nursery, kindergarten and/or primary teachers were questioned about the ‘musical child’ (Addessi and Carugati, 2010). Non-musician student participants (n=855) received musical training as part of the psycho-pedagogical curriculum at the University of Bologna over three years (for nursery practitioners) and four years (for kindergarten and primary school teachers). Some turning points emerged during these courses concerning the notion of prototypes of the musical child and conceptions of music; a tendency to move from the notion of a ‘*gifted, or able child*’ to one of ‘*the educated child*’: and viewing the musical child as developing through music education (Addessi and Carugati, 2010, p. 328). This tendency was interpreted as self-efficacy of students in their ability to teach. The researchers considered this to be significant, as so often teachers express a lack of confidence in teaching music. By explicitly including the consideration and analysis of students’ implicit musical knowledge (for example by asking students to complete the sentence ‘Music is... (words such as; *form, harmony, expressing, emotion* were given) and ‘musicality is...(words such as *melody, music, sound, hearing, singing, body and movement* ‘ were given) (ibid., 2010, pp.323-324). This self-reflection gave students a greater awareness of their professional role.

Ehrlin’s (2013) study also found that unless the subject knowledge of music was openly debated and discussed non-specialist Swedish early childhood practitioners would simply use songs and musical activities as tools for other learning yet still lack confidence to express aims involving musical development. Through adopting a discourse of music as a helpful tool for language acquisition, other functions of music were hidden. Leaders were found to be crucial in creating a restrictive or

supportive environment to open discussions about didactic choices. The study calls for preschool teacher training programmes in Sweden to include music as a standard subject.

These studies of trainee teachers show that training to teach music for generalists must be sufficiently detailed to instil confidence. A pre-existing knowledge of the subject and practical experience helps in building confidence levels. Musical training that includes students' self-reflection of their own musical knowledge gives them a greater awareness of their professional role. Perhaps by articulating what is meant by music and musicality in the students' own words helped in this process.

Lefevre (2004) introduced music into her work with young children as a social worker. She describes directive and non-directive approaches of using music with children. What mattered was the 'tuning-in' to the child and a focus on the process rather than the product (2004, p.340). The music 'contained' those emotions that children found unbearable to express in words, through symbolic metaphorical form, and also resistance and hiding in the music was possible when necessary. Although acknowledging that some musical skill may be required for some of the approaches, Lefevre suggests that pre-existing technical skills of most social workers should allow for the use of musical approaches to assist the development of the relationship between child and social worker, to enhance communication and to aid expressions of emotion at a deeper, more complex level.

It appears that when the focus of the musical activity is on something other than music, perhaps an area where practitioners have some expertise, the confidence issues about being 'musical' may diminish (although other functions of music may

remain hidden). A good starting point for developing music training programmes for non-specialist practitioners could be to focus on the relationship that professionals have with families/children.

## (II) Musician practitioners

There is no clear pathway in the UK for music specialists to qualify to work in early childhood contexts, and as a result there is an unregulated and motley assortment of music practice available for busy and non-expert Children's Centre managers to select for their setting should they wish to 'buy in' specialist music services. Part of the 'Music One-to-One project' (Young et al., 2007) included interviews with fifteen early childhood music practitioners, five members of whom were also observed at work. Most of the participants were classically trained musicians, some with an education qualification, but none had popular, jazz or world music backgrounds. Most worked as freelance practitioners, often in a number of different settings, combining private, fee-paying classes with work in Children's Centres. The training for working with the younger children encountered in the Children's Centre context was ad hoc, piecemeal and brief. Participants revealed that approaches that depended on lots of adult engagement and participation did not work so well in the Children's Centre settings.

Views were expressed about the purpose of their work as being about fostering parent-child interaction and bonding, evidence perhaps of the filtering through of the 'communicative musicality' research findings, and yet the observations of practice did not bear this out. The researchers argued that the gap between rhetoric and practice may be found in the professional identity of 'leading' music that must

entertain and be lively rather than be facilitative and communicative (Young et al., 2007, pp.260-261).

Similarly qualified music practitioners were found in Greenhalgh's (2013) small study of early childhood music practitioners working in fee-paying contexts. Of the five participants two had higher education classical music qualifications; one had community music training; one had a performing arts and one had a speech and language therapy background: not one had any early childhood education training or qualification. Music teaching was not the main aim of most of the sessions observed as part of the study: the focus was on other learning outcomes such as communication, language and raising confidence. Amongst the few courses that do provide training and education in early childhood music theory and practice, are four described here.

A new Masters level early years music qualification is now accredited by Birmingham City University and its Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), with the chance to focus on early years music in particular over three years part-time: the course combines distance learning and some face-to-face sessions. The first cohort of students began in 2010, with around 5 students in each year group (Young, 2013). Theoretical foundations of early childhood music, musical development, and methods of education, as well as the impact of new technologies, and research methods are included in the music-specific module with the aim of influencing practice that is reflective and underpinned by theory and research (CREC, 2013). Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance have a postgraduate certificate/diploma entitled 'The teaching musician' that is suitable for early years

music practitioners to gain a practical, musical qualification in creative education practice – the course includes a placement module (2013). A postgraduate certificate course was launched in September 2013, based on Sounds of Intent (SOI) project (Welch, Ockelford, and Zimmerman, 2007) it utilises the SOI framework for collecting and mapping children's emerging musical behaviours and may be particularly helpful for those working with children with disabilities or very young children.

Specific information about young children's musical development – especially the toddler years (2-4 years-old), some of which is found in section 2.4.2 (pp.54-57) and about young children's musicality (section 2.5.2 pp.75-79) appear to be less influential on early childhood music practice than the findings from infant research such as Trevarthen and Malloch's (2000) view of 'communicative musicality'. The rhetoric of music practice with children aged between one- and four-years-old has therefore become perhaps more centred in language learning and parent-child bonding than musicality and musical development.

### (III) Different approaches to leading music

Allowing for musical play as process, and not product or outcome in early childhood settings, may depend on the way that music is positioned in early years practice. This may be influenced by several factors. One factor may be individual practitioner's personal attitudes and conceptions of music teaching (Addessi and Carugati, 2010; Berger and Cooper, 2003; Kim and Kemple, 2011; Young, 2003a), as limited models are offered as part of their training. Another factor may be the confusion about 'learning through play' that may inhibit adult-led activities that include musical



elements. Incorporating free-flow musical play in settings as recommended in recent years by research and music specialists (Berger and Cooper, 2003; Evans, 2007; Young, 2003b, 2007; Young, Street, and Davies, 2006) has meant that models of ‘circle-time’ music where the whole group participates together may be regarded by some as ‘out of date’ or inappropriate practice, and yet it was a model frequently adopted in settings. The confusion about ‘learning through play’ and free-flowing activities that practitioners have reported in the Tickell Review of the EYFS (2011) may mean that music-based activities have reduced as few appropriate models of free-flow, child-initiated music exist, and the previous ‘circle-time’ music may no longer occur as it is felt to be too adult-led.

The ‘Tuning-in to Children Handbook’ (Evans, 2007) was commissioned and launched in 2007 by Youth Music, the approaches suggested for the former included child-initiated, adult-responsive activities with observation, documentation and reflection as a central theme of good practice: also suggested were ways of collaborative working with musicians and early years practitioners acknowledging that both groups are experts. It draws its theoretical inspiration from the Reggio Emilia (Malaguzzi, 1987) and Te Whāriki (Carr and May, 1993) approaches to education in the early years. The timing of the launch coincided with significant interest in early years education and care in the UK with the adoption of the EYFS, building on the Birth to Three Matters Curriculum (DfES, 2003). Music in early childhood was attempting to develop a practice model that would work alongside the play-based objectives of other learning. In spite of this innovative project, music does not seem to have become embedded in the curriculum as it might be in a Te

Whāriki curriculum, nor truly embraced as one of the Hundred Languages of Children as suggested by Reggio Emilia approach founder Loris Malaguzzi.

Allowing and planning for child-led, musical play may require knowledge of music theory and skills of observation, analysis, interpretation and reflection in order to provide appropriate support; it may involve scaffolding (Bruner, 1960; Vygotsky, 1978) and the provision of guidance for both parent and child participants.

When spontaneous singing and sound exploration is encouraged and valued as a regular part of young children's play it can become a more prominent and overt aspect of creativity in settings (Gluschkof and Kenney, 2011; Moorhead and Pond, 1941; Niland, 2009; Smithrim, 1997; Young, 2005a, 2008a). Niland (2006) found that allowing children to pursue their interests over time and including children's contributions to specially composed songs led to a sense of ownership of the musical material that was sustained and became embedded in the setting up to two years after the event.

By adopting a 'clustering' approach, akin to that suggested by Suthers (2004), where the adult presents herself 'ready to sing' and children come and go as they wish (Young, 2003a, p. 62) a free-flow, child-initiated and adult-guided situation can be encouraged.

Barrett (2006) in her longitudinal study of young children's invented songs acknowledged that children's creative endeavour considers children as having agency and their own musical culture. Children's original music making is rarely presented as art work in the same way as children's visual art is regarded.

In her case study of a four year old's (Charli) invented songs, several themes were identified; Mutuality and belonging; finding and making meaning; developing confidence in handling and making; and elaboration. Barrett makes a strong case for music as a creative rather than re-creative process, finding that Charli gained much social, emotional and cultural capital from the creative process and products of her own invented song making. This relied on the fostering and valuing of children's musical agency as songwriters in early childhood settings.

Musical play involves interpersonal communication, so that cognitive development occurs in the course of everyday social life. It depends on 'intersubjectivity' – a shared understanding between the novice and the expert (Rogoff, 1991, p.8) and is very much concerned with the transmission of culturally appropriate rules, behaviours and practices. Socio-cultural theory challenges perceptions of what children learn and how they learn it, and may be seen as part of a pendulum swing between oppositional positions of learning as 'transmission' (adult-led: pedagogy) or learning as 'acquisition' (child-led: play) (Brooker, 2010, p.41)

Social-learning models of music education, especially those that take place in an informal community-based context, may include a mid-point in the pendulum swing when parents are included in the children's learning. Taking the oppositional positions suggested by Brooker (above) the 'transmission' of knowledge via the leader is mediated through the parent with the child being free to participate more or less as they wish (learning as 'acquisition'). The group activity may allow for a 'playfulness' between parent and child through shared song singing. Young, Street and Davies (2007) found that a flexible structure, in which the music practitioner

took cues from the parents whilst still being alert to the overall pace and dynamics of the group was most effective. Musical play that occurs in a parent-child music group activity may be constrained by the presence of adults.

Much of the research highlights the value of stimulating children's invented and free vocal play, and yet the group music-making environment does not seem to encourage this. The presence of a 'leader' immediately sets up a power role that may be unwelcome but it is nonetheless up to the leader to be 'in control' of what happens in the session. If the identity of 'educator' is believed by the adults in a setting to be ascribed to the person who facilitates the music, who may be a freelance 'bought-in' service, then unsaid expectations already apply and the classroom or space is cleared and the children placed in a circle before their arrival so that music teaching 'transmission' can take place. It is still possible, however, for the leader of group music making to allow for parent and child to co-participate together in ways that might not otherwise be possible (Kalandyk, 1997; Niland, 2005).

The following sections focus more keenly on the reasons why this topic of research has been selected; they identify some of the gaps in the literature, and make some suggestions as to why this research is of specific interest to the field.

## 2.6 Musical parenting

This refers to the ways in which parents and children use music at home as part of their daily routines. It is acknowledged that parents have a prominent role in the music education of their babies and young children (Street, 2006; Street, Young, , Tafuri, and Ilari, 2003). The chapter in Tafuri's (2008) book entitled; 'The parents have their say' (pp. 89-118) reveals the enormous commitment of this particular group of parents who participated over six years in the research. It produced much enjoyment and satisfaction and for some a greater interest in music, knowledge of songs and more confidence in their own singing. The realities of having to try to make recordings and complete the diaries were challenging, especially when new babies arrived. A change in the variety of the music sessions was desired by some of the children over the length of the project. The music and songs became very special signifiers to the families: one spoke of 'a sign of complicity' (p.102), recognising each other through singing together. The parents reported children inventing songs on car journeys: one child sang a self-composed song for an entire 20-minute car journey (p.104). They also reported wider benefits of memory, reading ability, learning skills, and artistic sensitivity (pp.107-108). These parental comments indicate how involved they had become in their children's development from pre-birth through to starting school. It is impossible to know whether the music *per se* made the impact or, whether the parental participation and therefore increased awareness and involvement with their children made the difference or, most likely, a combination of both factors. The chapter nevertheless indicates a positive impact of both music and the project on the families who participated.

Four questionnaire studies of parents' use of musical activities with their children at home are helpful for my research. Ilari (2005) discovered that maternal occupation and previous musical experience determined mothers' use of music with their young children (7-9 months old). However her results showed that 92% of the sample of 100 mothers living in Canada reported singing to their babies (82% lullabies and children's songs, 13% invented songs and 5% world music, pop, new age etc.), 79% listened to music with them (53% lullabies and children's songs, 19% classical music, 29% world music pop, new age etc.). 72% thought that an 'appropriate' music for babies existed, with 16% saying that hard rock, rap and loud music were not appropriate. With the majority thinking there was an 'appropriate' music there was no consensus about what this should be. Mothers of only one child reported being surprised more frequently by their baby's memory for sounds. Mothers mediate the musical activities of their babies with choices based on their child's mood and the routines of the day.

The Commonwealth Fund Questionnaire (1995-1996) provided an overview of the health and social conditions of families, in telephone households, with young children in the United States. The sample (N=2017) was used for a research study of the musical practices of parents with their children at home (Custodero, Britto, and Brooks-Gunn, 2003b). Participants were interviewed about their musical engagement with their young children. The results indicated that the majority of participants sang/played music with their children daily 60% and weekly 32% (overall 90% at least once per week), with younger children being sung to more frequently than older. Firstborn children were more frequently sung to than latter-born children. Mothers sang more and played music more than fathers did, although

nearly half of all fathers sang/played music daily. Education of parents was also associated with singing/playing music with children – parents with more than high school education tended to sing/play music more frequently than those with less. Parental mental health (emotional distress) was associated with singing/playing music with children – parents who sang/played reported fewer depressive symptoms than those who did not. This does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship, although engaging in musical activities may be a helpful parenting strategy to cope with the stresses and strains of parenthood (Custodero et al., 2003b, pp. 553-569).

A similar questionnaire to explore the music practices of parents with children under five was conducted with a group of 63 Australian parents (de Vries, 2009). The results from the questionnaire about music, children and the home were similar to those in the Canadian study. Only 9% sang with their child every day, 21% never, 41% once per week or less, 29% more than once per week but not daily. Playing music to their children was more popular: 18% did so daily, 65% more than once a week, 11% once a week or less, 6% never. The Canadian study asked about singing or playing music as one question and this study separated the question into two parts but combining the scores of both questions together the Australian parents' results are similar to both the Canadian and American studies, which found 90% of parents sing/play music with their children at least once a week.

Focus group discussions with the parents revealed that children often listened to music in the car and that they did join in with the singing with the CD. Lack of time was often given as a reason for not engaging in music making together with their children. Interestingly, when parents were asked about their children's use of

percussion instruments played at home three of the parents felt this wasn't making music, not like singing (which they felt was real music) as they were not considered as real instruments (2009, p.398). The children of this study all attended preschools and the parents believed that these educational settings provided a full musical learning experience for their children which they evidenced by the fact that their children were able to sing songs by heart that they had learned at school. Parents cited the extra-musical effects of music for its beneficial value and therefore use at home; i.e. it soothes and calms children, and can help with numeracy and literacy skills (pp.401-403).

Custodero and Johnson-Green (Custodero and Johnson-Green, 2008) studied issues of contemporary American families' singing practices through interviews; observations and parents' journals. Parents were engaged as co-researchers in the project. Through analysis and interpretation of their data, three themes emerged:

1. Music and routines: Daily activity, music as routine and invented songs as routine
2. Maintaining, adapting and creating traditions
3. Musical play with learned, adapted and invented songs

There was evidence from the parents' comments that music in some homes had become a resource for coping with parenting, for establishing family rituals (such as bedtime), and for some expressed a desire to make music as special for their child as it was to them. Needing to know all the words to a song was considered to be important, and could restrict the repertoire choices. Children were afforded time and place to sing their own invented songs. Custodero et al. (ibid., 2008) challenged the



view that parents needed special training in order to be able to sing to their children at home.

The parents' use of music was analysed by using Bornstein's taxonomy of parenting behaviours to frame and examine the way music served parents in their role. The four domains that Bornstein (2002) identified are: Social, Didactic, Nurturant and Material. The data were collected in two studies from an optional, final, open-ended question of a large-scale questionnaire. The results changed between study one, in which the children were aged between four and six months, and study two in which the same children were ten to sixteen months old. In the category coded as 'Parent as teacher-observer' for study one, many of the keywords were located in Bornstein's 'Social' domain, reflecting the relevance of interpersonal interaction. In study two there was an increase in 'Didactic' keywords: learning and teaching appeared for the first time. Taking just one salient aspect of this research, 'Parent as observer' occurred in both studies, but in the second study (with the older children), parental observation pervaded the data across all domains with parents using musical idioms to assess infants' development (Custodero and Johnson-Green, 2008, pp. 33-34).

In the 'Music One-to-One project' (Young et al., 2007) a sample of mothers from diverse demographic groupings were questioned to discover their attitudes to the role of music at home. Three broad areas emerged: "*resources for music; recorded music from audio and mixed-media sources; singing and song repertoire*" (italics in original paper, Young et al., 2007, p.259). Toys, television, audio equipment and some live music were all given as sources of music in the home. Homes were found to be musically rich environments with new technologies playing an important part

in toddlers' music experiences. The daily routines of bath time and bed time were still the main events involving favourite songs and rhymes, although audio and multi-media equipment replaced the human song-singer in some cases (Young, 2008b). However, music was being used by parents for regulating their children's mood: soothing, calming, cheering and distracting (Young et al., 2007, p.260).

There is consensus across these studies in terms of parental engagement and the positive use of singing/playing music with children in the home environment, although there was no clear consensus about what early childhood music should most appropriately include. Whether the parents feel the same positive confidence about singing as part of a group in a setting away from home will be interesting to discover.

Studies of participation at parent-child music group activities (Barrett, 2009, Morris, 2013) of children aged between 18-48 months, who attended interactive music activities for parents and children. The programmes included: songs, dance, movement games, listening and playing simple instruments together with a CD, books and instruments to buy for use at home. Findings from Barrett's (2009) study demonstrated that the joint music-making functioned as a regulator of children's behaviour and emotional states; that joint and individual music-making both contributed to children's language development; that there was a role for individual music-making for children's 'self-making'; and that joint music-making as a family helped in fostering family unity (ibid., p. 130). The songs and activities from the group sessions modelled strategies to "capture and focus children's attention; intervene in and regulate thought and action; and encourage children to practise skills whose acquisition and mastery require a degree of repetition" (ibid, p.131). Music at

home was used as part of family rituals such as bedtime, as well as eating, drinking, playing outside and so on. Morris's (2013) findings showed that parents enjoyed using the CD at home and felt more involved in their children's education and learned about the benefits of music. (ibid., pp.19-21).

Pantsu (2013) found that when music and/or other arts activities were offered 'as part of life' they could become a bridge between home and the setting. Referring to Dewey, Pantsu viewed arts activities for families with young children not as separate aesthetic experiences away from everyday life but as an intrinsic part of them: 'as spiritual food' (Pantsu, 2013, p.248).

The link between the music group activity and the home is made possible by the parental participation with their children. This aspect will be explored in phase two of my research with a larger group of parents, using quantitative methods and a questionnaire to investigate the links to home and any benefits that are experienced by the participants and the wider family.

#### 2.6.1 Professionals' attitudes to musical parenting

Searching the literature for studies of early childhood professionals' attitudes to music revealed that this is an under-researched area. One study that provides some useful evidence was the Music Start Project (2005-2006) whose broad aims were:

1. 'To make music-making and singing part of the everyday creative life of families with children aged 0 to two years

2. To use music and singing to promote the learning and development of children aged three to five years in early years settings'

(MacKenzie and Clift, 2008, p. 200).

The first aim was met through the production of a music pack that was distributed to every home on the Isle of Wight, UK, with children under the age of two, through partnership with the Island's Health Visitor team (Clift et al., 2006). The pack comprised a song booklet and CD; two finger puppets and activity cards (including signs for parents to use) associated with different rooms in the home. This aspect of the project included a postal questionnaire of 80 parents. Two-thirds (63%) of the respondents said that the pack had helped them sing and make music with their children. Other outcomes revealed their attitudes to the benefits of music as being a source of fun (98%); assisting language development (93%); developing an interest in music (88%). Just over half (55%) felt that music 'definitely' helped with stresses of childcare and less than half (43%) felt it helped with confidence in relating to their child. However, only 18% felt that music and singing contributed to a child's social development, since of course the use of music in the home does not include the social, peer-to-peer interactions that might be possible through group music-making which my own research will investigate (Clift et al., 2006, p. 13).

The second aim was achieved by designing and implementing a training programme for early years practitioners. The project was evaluated by Canterbury Christ Church University, who conducted a questionnaire to assess the impact of the training and practitioners' views on links between music and the learning areas of the EYFS. The results showed that the large majority of respondents believed that music definitely

made an important contribution to all areas of the curriculum (ibid, p.203). This project, funded by Youth Music, was carried out at a time when working in partnership in early childhood was in its infancy, and it provides useful information for my research on early years practitioners' attitudes to the benefits of music for learning. It does not, however, include the views of a diverse group of professionals

My own research will be exploring the perspectives of Children's Centre professionals including early years practitioners (as in the Music Start project) as well as health visitors, midwives, social workers, family support workers, musicians and managers.

#### 2.6.2 Parent-child group music making in early childhood

Anna Freud's early work of observation of parent-child behaviours in a nursery setting demonstrated the fundamental importance of the parent-child relationship for learning, development and emotional stability (Freud, 1966). Hallam and MacDonald (2009) asserted that the growth of community music education is partially connected to the acknowledgement that everyone can derive pleasure and enjoyment from musical experiences from a young age as it is socially and biologically part of being human (see also MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell, 2002; Trevarthen, 2002). Early childhood music groups for parents and children have long been available in community settings such as church halls and community centres, but these have until recently been on a private, fee-paying basis. However with the arrival of Sure Start and later Children's Centres in England, these music activities are now provided free of charge in settings as part of an integrated service provision for families with

children under five. Traditionally the parent-child music groups had music pedagogy at the forefront, with the expectation that children and parents would participate ‘appropriately’ and learn about music, albeit in a fun and age/stage-appropriate style. The methods of Kodály, (Forrai, 1990), Dalcroze, (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1912; Jaques-Dalcroze and Cox, 1972) Orff (Frazee, 1987; Orff, 1977), and Gordon (Gordon, 1971, 1999) have been useful approaches to teaching music, and frequently the leaders of the private music groups have been qualified music teachers.

The music groups in Children’s Centres may have a predominantly different focus - their aims may be more related to bonding and attachment; to children’s development in other areas of learning such as speech and language delay; to potential additional needs or maternal depression; or even to provide a venue for supervised contact. The structure of the sessions may be less formal, and the music seen as a useful means to achieve other outcomes. The music groups may be led by a professional musician, music teacher, franchise owner or a member of the Children’s Centre team with an interest in music who might play an instrument or like singing, depending on the budgetary/operational decisions of the manager in the particular setting. This provision is very diverse and totally unregulated (Young, 2007).

Gudmundsdottir (2010) studied how parent-infant music classes benefitted a group of younger (19-23 years) as compared with older mothers (35-41 years). Although no statistically significant differences were found between the groups in terms of mothers’ subjective mental well-being, nor in the results of the ‘Singing Confidence’ questionnaire which they completed in the study (p.307), the results were more positive than was expected. Both age groups of mothers scored higher than was

expected on subjective mental well-being. This study of a small sample of mothers with ages at both ends of the parental age range included no investigation of the intervening age group. Because the activities were offered free of charge the younger mothers were able to participate in the study. Most music group sessions in Children's Centres are offered free of charge to enable all to attend. Some parents who might never consider paying for such an activity will attend when it is offered free of charge at their local setting.

A study of the role of musicians by Young, Street and Davies (2007) found that some of the practices that had been successful in private, fee-paying situations were not equally effective in the Children's Centre context. As a result, it seems that a new type of music group session is evolving to meet new requirements.

Two studies from music therapy practice have some helpful findings. Standley, Walworth and Nguyen (2009) investigated the effects of parent-child group music activities on toddler development. Use was made of an adapted ITSEA (Infant-Toddler Social and Emotional Assessment) measurement tool and the Standley-Hughes checklist (Standley and Hughes, 1996) to assess toddlers engaged in structured music activities. The results showed that participation in between 4 and 7 music sessions significantly increased developmental skill scores. Significantly more of the music group demonstrated higher levels of musical and cognitive skills than did a control group who did not participate in the sessions. It was found that the caregiver involvement was critical for attendance and structure. The second study from music therapy practice was conducted by Nicholson, Berthelsen, Abad,

Williams and Bradley (2008), who found that parenting behaviours were improved and nurtured by regular attendance at group music sessions. These studies demonstrate benefits to children and parents in a therapeutic, clinical setting, and also highlight the relevance of a shared musical experience for parent/caregiver and child in acquiring new skills and building relationships.

Lonie's (2010) review of the effects of early years music education found that musical activities are popular with parents of young children, and may help with participants' feelings of well-being. The value of experienced music leaders was highlighted by Tafuri's (2008) study, which recommended that music sessions for children from birth to three years of age should take place in music centres with people who are experts in early childhood music, and that children should be accompanied by their parents to "*... all have this experience...to discover and build a new kind of relationship*" (Tafuri, 2008, p. 133).

Only one study was found that had a similar context to my own. Parent-child music groups at Sure Start Centres were investigated to ascertain the effects on mothers of participating in a music group with their young children (Scott-Hall, 2008). One of the four groups studied was comprised of asylum seekers for whom English was an additional language, and issues of inclusion and trauma were prominent. The action research project used a grounded theory approach. Outcomes from mothers were grouped into five themes:

1. Close maternal bonding and increased mother/child interaction in daily life
2. Increased self-confidence, leading to:



3. A heightened sense of well-being
4. Relating more readily to other participants
5. Reducing isolation and increasing inclusion in the wider community

Singing together as a group led to comments like: “Everyone is sort of happy and on a ‘high’ after the music” (parent participant, in Scott Hall 2008, p.27), participants felt that they were coming into a room full of friends, and the structure of activities meant that everyone felt safe. Mothers reported that they were using material from the sessions at home for play, for handling stressful situations, as a way of managing behaviour, for supporting speech and language development, and enhancing the quality of their daily life. Some mothers adapted the materials from the sessions to make them culturally appropriate for their family (p.28).

The research studies discussed in this section involved parents and group music making activities for parents and children, yet only one investigated the same context as my own research (Sure Start settings were the precursors of Children’s Centres). Scott Hall (2008) used an action research approach with unstructured interviews, observations, case studies and field notes to gain the perceptions of a diverse group of mothers whilst mine will employ a mixed methods design and include observations of children’s musical behaviours.

## **2.7 Summary and conclusion**

This chapter has provided information about the community-based context for this research study, revealing that music groups for parents and children are widely available at Children’s Centres but that the rationale for their inclusion in

programmes of activities is unclear, the aim of this research is to investigate this rationale from the perspective of parents and practitioners.

The social-cultural framework for this study was explored through discussion of three domains of learning: social, emotional and cultural, with musicality appearing as central to the process of development in all three domains.

Musical development was then explored from infants through the period of early childhood (0-8years), with a focus on toddler development as this study includes child participants aged between one- and three-years-old. Starting with ‘communicative musicality’ as a function of parent-infant preverbal interaction, musical development in the toddler years is linked to movement and speech with spontaneous/invented songs and chants created whilst moving. Music making is strongly social and interactional. The transfer benefits of music learning were discussed in relation to amongst others: language skills, spatial-temporal reasoning and empathy.

The chapter then went on to examine early childhood music practice. Non-musician practitioners have expressed a lack of confidence in using music in their teaching as insufficient time was given to their training in music. There is no clear pathway for a musician to become an early childhood music practitioner, and so aims and objectives of different pathways are quite diverse. There is still uncertainty about what constitutes good early childhood music practice.

Finally the review investigated musical parenting – maternal occupation and musical experience determined mothers’ uses of music at home. Parent-child music groups are offered free of charge at Children’s Centres and there is a huge diversity of provision. In therapeutic music groups for young children and parents some benefits have been found in children’s cognitive development and improved parenting behaviours. Studies have shown an increase in mother/child interaction, increased parental self-confidence and well-being.

This review has shown that musical interactions from infancy onwards are fundamental to our social, emotional and cultural development and the socio-cultural theoretical framework will be helpful when basing a study in a community-context where parents and children participate together in musical activities. Since Children’s Centre professionals have not been asked about their attitudes to the benefits of music before, their beliefs and views will add to knowledge of early childhood music education, integrated team-working and Children’s Centres’ communities of practice. A preliminary, exploratory, qualitative interview study seemed the most appropriate place to start the research process in order to establish a preliminary rationale and to generate themes to explore further in a quantitative questionnaire.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The studies: design and method**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology and design of this research project. It will start by outlining the overall design of the study, then follow the aims and objectives of the research project including the research questions. Next is a discussion of general issues associated with mixed methods, followed by specific issues of this design and then of the specific methods selected for each phase of the research. The advantages and disadvantages of the design will be discussed as well as methods of data collection methods and analysis. Finally, consideration is given to the subject of ethics in relation to this study - gaining voluntary informed consent; the participation of young children and vulnerable adults; power relations and gatekeepers.

The aim of this study is to explore and gain greater understanding of the phenomenon of parent/carer and child group music-making in the Children's Centre context. This is a field with very little published research so the main aim will be to explore and expand understanding of the topic (Burke-Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

As well as seeking to explore and understand, the study will also investigate the effect of the musical activities on participants' development and attitudes. By addressing two different sorts of questions the intention is to provide a comprehensive picture of the nature and development of parent/carer and child

music-making and the attitudes of professionals working in the Children's Centre.

A multi-method strategy will assist in combining:

- Study 1 – Qualitative Interview Study - the preliminary, exploratory work of the structured interview study
- Study 2 – Quantitative Questionnaire Study - the subsequent descriptive and explanatory aspect of the questionnaire.
- Study 3 – Behavioural Observation Comparison Study - the third, observation study will employ observation methods to compare the behaviours in three different parent-child activity groups in a Children's Centre (one of which is music) to investigate, what if any, are the specific benefits of music.

By employing a mixed methods approach 'enhancing interpretability' of the findings is possible (Robson, 2002, p. 371).

The next section introduces the outline of the research aims, objectives and the questions that have guided the design and methodological choices.

### **3.2 Aims, Objectives and Research Questions**

This section will consider the aims and objectives of the research study and the research questions at their heart. The different types of questions guide the selection of method for each stage of the process: some are exploratory and others more specific.

### 3.2.1 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of this research project are:

- (I) To explore the attitudes of parents and Children's Centre professionals members towards group music-making activities.

By seeking to explore attitudes this objective calls for a data collection tool that allows for freedom of expression. Interviewing participants provides an opportunity to elicit views and attitudes in some depth on a topic. The use of a standardized interview schedule with pre-determined question wording and order was selected as it increases the comparability of responses, reduces the effects of interviewer bias and facilitates organization of the data (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2008). A semi-structured interview guide might have been an option as it is flexible and allows for participants to expand on areas of importance for them. It was felt that the standardised interview schedule would ensure as much as possible that each interview event was structured in the same way and the interviewer's role was controlled as much as possible. This helped with organisation and comparing responses within the data.

- (II) To develop a questionnaire to explore and understand the rationale for music in Children's Centres.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to clarify, elaborate on and quantify the themes generated by the interview study. The questionnaire instrument is a quantitative measuring tool. By measuring responses from a wider population of the same groups of participants it will be possible to make more definite claims about the original themes discovered through the interviews (Creswell, 2003)

(III) To investigate what, if any, are the specific benefits of music compared to art and outdoor parent-child group activities.

(IV) To develop systematic observation measurement tools to assess young children's emerging development.

Objectives III and IV are linked. The former represents a question to be investigated, and the latter, the means of its investigation. Observation measurement tools will be devised and used to assess very young children's behaviours. Analyses of these data will be both qualitative and quantitative to produce as full and accurate an account as possible. The design includes quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods to ensure that as accurate as possible representations of the children's participation and involvement within the activity sessions have been recorded.

(V) To observe the implicit musical pedagogy that is developing in this specific context.

This will be considered as an aspect of the analyses of all three phases of the research project and will be commented on throughout the reporting of the different studies.

### 3.2.2 Research Questions

The research questions that provide the framework for the study are:

- (I) Why is music offered in Children's Centres?
- (II) What do Children's Centre professionals consider to be the benefits of musical activities for families?
- (III) What do parents/carers consider to be the benefits of music for their children?
- (IV) What do the musicians consider to be the benefits of music-making with parents/carers and children?
- (V) Do parents/carers benefit from attending music groups together with their children?
- (VI) Do children benefit from their parents'/carers' involvement in the group music-making sessions?

It is possible to identify different types of questions here. The first question seeks to uncover and explore, inviting principally a qualitative approach. Questions 2, 3 and 4 are qualitative in nature as the 'what' questions are aimed at exploring participants' attitudes to the topic. Quantitative tools of analysis may assist in enhancing and augmenting the analysis of data. The final two questions are inferential in quality. With the use of the word 'do' in the question there is the implication of testing an idea and therefore the suggestion of a quantitative approach. Some have argued that it is incompatible to include questions from both inductive/qualitative and deductive/quantitative paradigms in a single research study, (for example; Lincoln and Guba 1985, Smith and Heshusius 1986 in Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, p. 66). This incompatibility thesis is rooted in the paradigm 'wars' which was predicated on the link between epistemology and method.



By adopting the pragmatist position ‘*common sense*’ can prevail and both methods be viewed as compatible. ‘*Common sense*’ was defined in one of several ways by Dewey (1938) as good *judgement*; “Sagacity is power to discriminate the factors that are relevant and important in significance in given situations; it is a power of discernment...and to bring the discriminations to bear upon what is to be done...” (Hickman and Alexander, 1998, p. 381). The inclusion of both types of question is designed to fully explore and understand the topic, as yet, un-researched. The combination of question types will allow for general and specific issues to be addressed and to give a full and rich picture.

### **3.3 Mixed Methods (General)**

This section focuses on the philosophical approach to this study, the advantages and disadvantages that may be inherent in the method and the researcher position in the paradigm.

With the adoption of a mixed-method design as a framework it is acknowledged that selecting ‘what works’ has been considered the most useful approach (Plano-Clark and Creswell, 2008). The research design is a strategy that links the choice of methods to the eventual outcomes, and the methodology is a philosophical stance or theoretical perspective to frame the research questions which in turn requires thinking about an epistemological position in terms of theory of knowledge. The framework is an inter-related whole (Crotty, 1998).

For this research project the knowledge claim position and therefore the framework for the design is situated in the pragmatist paradigm (Kuhn, 1996). This position acknowledges that research takes place in social, political and historical contexts and allows the researcher freedom to choose methods, techniques and procedures of research that best meet their needs. Truth is “what works at the time...to provide the best understanding of a research problem.” (Creswell 2003 pp.12) By adopting this paradigmatic position multiple methods as well as different assumptions and worldviews are possible. By positioning the research within this paradigm finding solutions to problems becomes more important than the methods and therefore all, and any, approaches may be used to understand the problem (Creswell 2003, p.11). This is well suited to an exploratory study that needs to be flexible, combining both numerical and text data collection and analysis methods in order to view the topic through different lenses and therefore strengthen the findings of the exploration.

There are challenges to employing this strategy Bryman (2012) cautions that careful consideration is needed of the way in which the elements of the different methods are mixed together as ‘the outcomes of combining quantitative and qualitative research can be planned or unplanned’ (2012, p. 625). Bryman (2006) explores the various typologies that are possible and logical in multi-strategy research. He analysed 232 social science articles in which a mixed methods approach was used in the research design to investigate the rationale given by authors for their choice of method. He found that outcomes can be unpredictable: the open-ended aspect of qualitative research producing surprises; changes of direction and new insights, and with the imaginative application of quantitative measures; fresh understandings (p. 112). It will be important to relate the data collection and analysis back to the research

questions at every phase of the study - to ensure that the design of each stage is relevant, logical, and precisely structured, to answer the questions to which that particular phase relates.

Although a pragmatist position means selecting ‘what works’, it is still possible for there to be epistemological challenges and inconsistencies to overcome. These challenges and chosen solutions will be discussed throughout this chapter. A weakness of adopting a mixed methods approach is that it relies on a breadth of skill and experience of both methods from the investigator - it may combine the weaker aspects of both methods due to inexperience or lack of knowledge. It is a time-consuming approach to adopt as it includes both methods - their data collection and data analysis procedures. There may be issues with data analysis too, as qualitative research tends towards the exploratory and quantitative concerned with confirmatory research. Interpretation of conflicting findings may therefore be problematic. On the other hand, the multiple perspectives gained by mixing methods leads to greater internal validity and the possibility of making inferences; including cause and making conclusions (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). It may also be possible to use the strengths of one method to overcome the weakness of the other method - The words adding meaning to the numbers and the numbers adding precision to the words. The flexibility that the sequential design affords will allow for findings from one phase to influence the design of subsequent phases which will be useful for an exploratory research study (Burke-Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004).

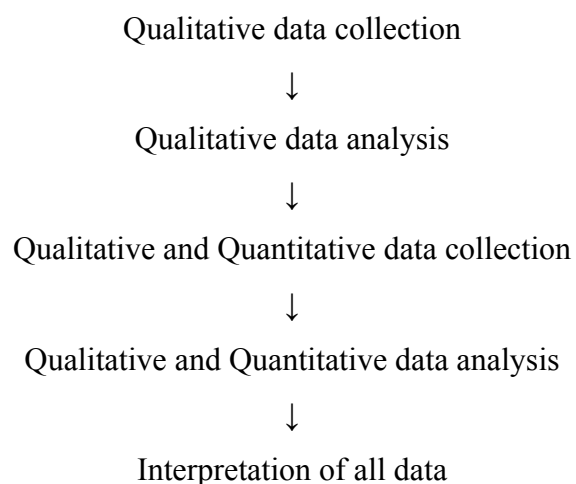
By having an awareness of the respective strengths and weaknesses of the two methods the researcher will endeavour to minimize the weaknesses and play to the strengths of the particular method in use at the time. The mixed method design can

be used in different ways - the following section discusses the particular issues that arise from adopting an exploratory, sequential approach. The reasons for selecting this design and the ensuing issues will also be addressed.

### **3.4 Design Issues**

The topic being explored through this study is un-researched and therefore has little established literature and theory to underpin the research questions. This indicates the need for open-ended questions in the first instance to guide and shape the remaining studies and areas to pursue further. This implies that the study will give priority to the initial, qualitative phase of data collection and analysis. The inductive results will serve as inputs to the deductive goals of the subsequent quantitative approaches. Creswell (2003) indicates that a sequential, exploratory study is ‘useful when a researcher wants to explore a phenomenon but also wants to expand on the qualitative findings’ (ibid, p.216). (The model is also useful when developing and testing a new instrument, which is also intended for this study).

A sequential, exploratory strategy comprises:



When the strategy is developed it is vital to be clear about where the integration of the approaches will occur. In this design the methods will be integrated at the interpretation stage of the data analysis. During the qualitative phase, any quantitative analysis will only be used to enhance, complement and contextualise the findings and vice versa.

#### 3.4.1 Design of the Project

This study will use a sequential, exploratory mixed-methods design. Creswell et al. (2003) recommend a description of the strategy and a visual model of the procedures included in implementing the strategy. Morse (1991) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) have given useful notation suggestions for describing and illustrating the design process. These relate to a sequential, exploratory design:-

- A “ ➔ ” indicates a sequential form of data collection
- Capitalization indicates an emphasis or priority on the qualitative or qualitative data and analysis in the study.
- “Quan” and “Qual” stand for quantitative and qualitative respectively

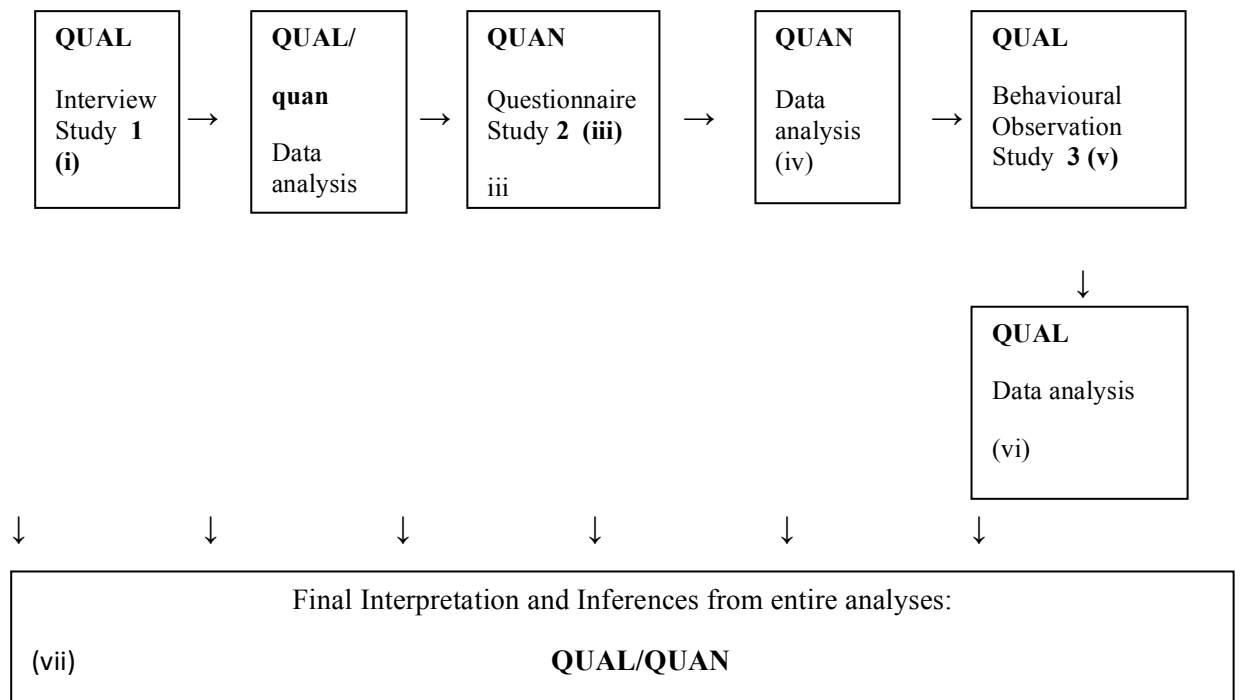


Fig. 3.1 Diagram showing the sequential flow of the research design

Study One – Interview Study (box i) is qualitative in design, the lack of strong theory to guide the exploration suggests open-ended questions for the interviews and therefore a standardised interview schedule was designed to gather the views and opinions of participants. Box ii indicates that the analysis for the interview study has the priority given to qualitative analysis with quantitative methods used to contextualise the findings. The issues concerning the combining of methods of data analysis will be discussed in more detail in the following section. The findings of the first study assisted in the design of:

Study Two – Questionnaire Study. Here, the data collection tool was a quantitative instrument in the form of a specifically developed questionnaire. The purpose of this

study is to generalise the findings of the first study to the wider population. The analysis of the numeric data was quantitative. The conclusions of the two initial studies influenced the design of:

Study 3- (boxes v) The Behavioural Observation Comparison Study necessitated the development of suitable observation techniques and data analysis methods.

Extensive feasibility tests in the pilot study stage of various observation methods led to the selection of a qualitative approach to the descriptions of group behaviours (box vi). This method allowed for a richly textured description of the overall group, as well as individual children's behaviours.

A final interpretation of the entire series of analyses will take place at the end of the sequence with the generation of the thesis.

Now that the overall structure of the research has been outlined it is time to move to the individual phases as they occur in the project. Each phase is described and discussed in sequence to give an idea of how the whole research study design comes together. The strengths and weaknesses that arise from selecting one method over another are indicated and discussed throughout.

#### 3.4.2 Design: Interview Study

The interview is a flexible tool for gathering information on a topic. It allows the participants to provide their interpretations of the world in which they live and to give their point of view on situations that concern them (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2008). One of the purposes of the study is to explore the attitudes of

different groups of adults working with, or who accompany, the children who attend music-making sessions at the Children's Centre. Open-ended questions provide rich data and gain individual perspectives of a phenomenon. The interview enables multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard (Cohen et al., 2008) and is therefore excellent for an exploratory study where the generation of themes is required. In this case the interview may be regarded as; "...a construction site for knowledge" Kvale (1996 p.14). Indeed, one advantage of interviewing over administering a questionnaire is that it allows for greater depth in responses and can be conducted at a suitable speed for the interviewee, it also avoids any difficulties for those with limited literacy. Conversely, this could be seen in some ways as a disadvantage as the richness of data contributed by participants can lead to subjectivity and interviewer bias. The standardization of the interview process overcomes this to some extent. The interview is a social encounter, not simply a means for information gathering (Cohen et al. 2008, p. 350) and therefore the role of the researcher should not be ignored - as a white, middle-class, middle-aged, female, early years music teacher I may have influenced the interview and biased responses of participants (Bailey, 1994) The researcher was also known to some participants as either their music group leader or a colleague and yet was completely unknown to others.

These challenges were overcome to some degree by utilising the question schedule and refraining from probing further after responses were given thereby keeping the researcher's contribution to a minimum. On Whyte's (1982) 6-point scale of directiveness and responding (in Cohen et al. 2007, p.362), 1=least directive and 6 = the most directive, the researcher positioned herself at scale point 1; 'Making



encouraging noises' and only asked a subsequent question if necessary; "That's interesting could you say some more about that?" However, it must be acknowledged that who the researcher was to the participants may have had an influence on their responses. In some cases it may have enabled an honest and open exchange.

By asking questions to different participant groups it was possible to triangulate some of the questions and responses, gaining not only individual perspectives on the phenomenon but indications of agreements or disagreements in attitudes between the various groups. It is not possible to guarantee the type of responses from participants and the interview schedule may not ask the 'right' questions to generate the questionnaire themes. This challenge was overcome by a pilot study of the interview schedule to test its effectiveness and to standardise the procedure.

A small pilot study tested the effectiveness of the standardised interview schedule and small changes were made as a result. Peer researchers were used to test for reliability of the emerging themes in both the pilot and main study. The proceedings from all interviews were audio-recorded and partially transcribed for analysis to: determine themes, issues and attitudes for further exploration through the questionnaire.

Kvale (1996, p. 166) argues that the prefix *trans* in the word transcribe indicates a change of state or form. Much is lost in the transcription of an interview. It is a social encounter and includes much non-verbal communication. Cohen, Manion and

Morrison (2008, p.367) suggest that by putting into written language what has occurred in an oral interchange is, in effect, moving from one set of rules and conventions to another which can compound the potential for loss of data. It was decided therefore, to transcribe only some of the interviews to clarify themes within the data.

#### 3.4.3 Data Analysis Issues: Interview Study

Once the themes were clearly established using a thematic analytic approach to the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), the method of frequency counts assisted in collecting numerical information within the theme categories. The qualitative analysis of the data had the greater priority as it was the main method of analysis and was used to identify the emerging themes. The content analysis added relativity to the qualitative findings and enabled further abstraction and conceptualisation of the themes by indicating strength of feeling expressed by participants in the various categories. The numerical analysis enhanced and augmented the main qualitative method. This plays to the *complementary strengths* argument – implying a combining of strategies and methods in multiple and creative ways rather than seeing mixed methods approaches as being concerned with triangulation or corroboration alone (Plano-Clark and Creswell 2008: 280).

#### 3.4.4 Design: Questionnaire Study

The purpose of the Questionnaire was to link the research questions with the findings from the initial Interview Study to the design of questionnaire questions in order to elicit accurate information from respondents. The use of a self-completion questionnaire enabled access to a geographically widely dispersed population and

gave a single researcher the possibility of gathering opinions from a larger sample than would have been possible to interview alone given the time and financial constraints. Reaching a larger sample helped in generalising the findings from the Interview Study to the wider population thereby gaining some indication of relativity and strength of feeling about the various theme categories. Some view questionnaires as falsely prestigious because of their quantitative nature, and suggest that respondents may answer from a mix of politeness, boredom and a desire to be seen in a good light rather than a true reflection of their beliefs, feelings or behaviour (Robson 2002, p. 231). The strength of the e-questionnaire was complete anonymity and participation at a pace and timing that may be preferable to those questionnaires using an interviewer.

A questionnaire has the advantage of being fairly quick to complete and with an absence of interviewer effects, the questions are asked in precisely the same way to every participant. An online web-Survey company was utilised for the development of the instrument. 'SurveyMonkey' and 'KwikSurvey' were considered and the latter was chosen as it was possible to reach more participants free of charge with this company. A bonus with the use of a web-survey tool is the possibility of designing filter questions, so that respondents who answer 'Yes' to a filter question are 'piped' in one direction and the 'No' respondents skip to the next relevant question. It is also possible to only have one question per page should this be desirable. One disadvantage to using a free survey tool was the presence of advertisements appearing throughout the questionnaire when it was 'live'.

Although one or two of the questions included a text box for comments the main purpose of the questionnaire was to collect numerical data to enhance the previous findings from the interview study, not to gain more additional text data.

#### (I) Specific issues concerning e-questionnaires

There are certain advantages to administering a questionnaire online rather than by post. Cobanoglu, Ward and Moreo (2001) found online questionnaire response rates to be higher than postal administration (26% versus 44% of sample  $n=300$ ).

However, both Tse (1998); and Sheehan (2001) found that online questionnaires typically generate lower response rates than postal questionnaires. Manfreda, Bosnjak, Berzelak, Haas and Vehovar (2008) found that web questionnaires achieved on average an 11% lower response rate than 'other questionnaire modes'. In the case of this research study an online questionnaire was the only option for reaching a wide geographical area and unknown participants. By linking to the questionnaire from national parent forums no personal information was needed to find participants nor for them to take part. Perhaps the high level of anonymity made participation easier. The response rate was also quicker than postal questionnaires, and as already mentioned a wide geographical area was possible. The cost of administering an online questionnaire was kept low, with no postage costs.

Another advantage from the point of view of data analysis was the ease of transfer to SPSS software by means of direct export into excel format. This obviated the need for manual data entry and therefore reduced the possibility of human error.

An unavoidable disadvantage was that there was the possibility of multiple replies; some people may complete the questionnaire more than once, although the reasons for doing that in this case are unclear as there was nothing obvious to be gained from doing this.

## (II) Finding respondents: Parent Questionnaire

‘Netmums’ and ‘Mumsnet’ are two nationwide, online forums for parents. The questionnaire was posted on both sites. It is possible that only a certain demographic of the population might use such forums, access to a computer and good English literacy levels are required. To overcome the bias that this suggests, hard copies of the questionnaire were given to participants at one Children’s Centre with high indices of social deprivation. In some cases the questions were read to these participants to enable their full participation. Bryman (2012, p. 672) argues that aggregating data from two methods of collection is not desirable if part of the variation in respondents’ replies could be attributed to the way they received and completed the questionnaire. However there were no perceptible differences in responses from both datasets (i.e. online or paper) although there was less missing data from the paper copies. Around forty percent of the total parent sample comprised paper copy participants.

## (III) Dates of pilot and main questionnaire studies

The pilot testing of the parent questionnaire was between 13<sup>th</sup> January -18<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and the main, amended questionnaire was launched online on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012. The questionnaire link closed on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The link to the questionnaire was posted on Facebook: via ‘Music in Children’s Centres’ and ‘Early Years Music Group’ pages and ‘Linked-in: Early Years Research Professionals and Early Years Professionals’ groups.

#### (IV) Finding respondents: Practitioner Questionnaire

Every Children's Centre manager was invited via email in three locations; the county of Norfolk (to include rural and semi-rural settings), the London borough of Wandsworth (a suburban location) and the London borough of Tower Hamlets (a city centre location). The centre's participation was confirmed by the individual manager's positive response to the invitation after which the weblink to the questionnaire was sent to them for forwarding to their practitioners. Fourteen managers requested the questionnaire link and it was not possible to identify which practitioner participants came from which location; it was decided that analysis relating to that demographic information was beyond the remit of this research project and not relevant to the research questions, although the setting location would certainly be an interesting area for further study and comparison. In addition, musician participants were invited from the Facebook 'early years music group' page, a requirement of participation was that they worked in a Children's Centre.

#### 3.4.5 Design: Behavioural Observation Comparison Study

Observation, as a research process, offers the opportunity to collect data in naturally occurring situations and allows the investigator to look directly at phenomena *in situ*. Robson (2002) suggests that individuals may not do what they say they do and observation allows the researcher to look with fresh eyes on behaviour that might otherwise go unnoticed and to provide a reality check to assist with triangulation of results from other studies. As a method it is helpful in moving beyond the attitudes and perceptions expressed through the Interview and Questionnaire data to access those things that participants may not feel able to say or are unaware are important or relevant.

This study was originally designed to use only systematic observation methods, although as a result of the pilot study a number of changes had to be made to ensure that the group behaviours were included in the analyses. Initially the idea was to observe individual children's behaviour in the three activity groups. The study was eventually re-designed to use qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The issues that arose will be discussed in the following section.

A systematic observation coding schedule was devised that included the development of codes across a number of domains; 'non-verbal behaviours, spatial behaviours, extra-linguistic and linguistic behaviours' (Robson, 2002, p. 327) and was useful for establishing the prevalent behaviours in the different activities. As Bryman (2012, p. 276) suggests weaknesses in employing an observation schedule were encountered: it was cumbersome to operate; required a level of interpretation; and also missed the group behavioural elements.

Although there was *inter-observer* agreement (Robson, 2002, p. 340) the systematic observation schedule did not collect the data relating to the group as a whole (it was not designed to do this) and it was clear that the group aspects were an important part of the comparison between groups. It was therefore used alongside an open observation method of data collection where the behaviours of child participants were observed for a randomly chosen, fifteen minute time period. Coding of the behaviours was then aggregated into theme categories for qualitative, interpretive analysis. This became the dominant method of data collection and analysis for the study.

### (I) Participants

Five children were selected from each of the activity groups on the basis of age to ensure that outlier age groups were avoided and an equal balance of female and male children was achieved. One child attended two of the activity groups so she was selected for that reason. It was essential that the child stayed at the group for the entire fifteen minute time period, some children left early or arrived late so were excluded from selection. An ideal situation would have been to observe exactly the same children in each of the activities with the same parent in attendance. This was impossible - the pragmatic approach of selecting 'what works' was considered the most effective solution.

### **3.5 Issues of methodology and tools (general)**

The selection of a sequential, mixed-methods design for this exploratory study produced some unexpected benefits. The sequential design meant that the findings from one study influenced the design of the subsequent study and so on. This was of particular importance in the final phase of the research project in which the pilot study findings suggested that the chosen research tool was only partially successful in gathering all the data. The overall framework of the exploratory design allowed for a supplementary research tool to be devised and added for the main study. This was a useful finding in relation to methodology that supported the choice of this flexible and dynamic research method that was responsive and reactive to the findings as the research progressed. The pragmatic approach supported this by encouraging the selection of methods and data collection tools that were most appropriate and effective for the job in hand.



### 3.6 Ethical considerations

The Ethical Guidance of Roehampton University (2010), BERA (2004) and Research Councils UK (2009), and the British Psychological Society (2009) have some common codes and principles; informed consent and the right to withdraw, vulnerable adults and young children participants, confidentiality, avoiding harm, health and safety considerations, research integrity. These have all been considered in relation to this research project and will be addressed below. In addition the area of power relations has been included.

#### 3.6.1 Specific ethical issues

There are some ethical issues raised by conducting a research project with adults and children participants and the use of a range of methods of data collection and analyses. These are detailed in Table 4.1 below along with proposals for addressing these issues. Issues of informed consent are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 3.1 Table of ethical issues and solutions

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>The Roehampton University Ethics Application Guidance (University, 2010)</b><br><br>Voluntary informed consent will be sought from every participant. Information about the research must be understood in order to give full consent. Participants may not have high levels of literacy or have English as an additional language | A consent letter outlining the research in simple terms is prepared for all participants to sign as an 'opt-in' to the research (an example is attached as an appendix to this form Appendix A)<br>A bullet point checklist for all participants with clip art images to aid understanding has also been prepared to aid with literacy |
| The manner in which the questionnaire is presented should give the recipient the right not to participate.  | The questionnaire has only one 'must answer' question all the others rely on the participants' willingness to answer. They 'opt-in' to every question. The questionnaire is online so completely anonymous   |
| Notwithstanding the agreement of a subject to participate in any questionnaire, interview or testing covered by the guidelines above, he or she may at any stage withdraw that agreement.   | It will be made clear in the consent letter that participants can withdraw at any point during the process of the study. It will also be included as part of gaining ongoing consent during the research process with parents and children   |
| The information from any individual questionnaire   | Anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| or interview shall remain confidential, and the anonymity of the respondents shall be preserved.   | by the use of SPSS coding and the keeping of personal details of participants separate at all times from the data collected. Personal details will be stored on the researcher's personal, password protected laptop and the data will be stored in a lockable filing cabinet at the University. When disseminating findings no individual centre practitioner, parent or child should be identifiable from the findings. |
| Any investigator processing personal data by electronic means should be aware of and comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 1998 (see Section 4.10).   | Any audio files of interviews will be transferred from the electronic device to CD and kept with the other documentary data and transcripts in the lockable filing cabinet.<br>Visual image film data will be stored on a password-protected laptop and the original material will be deleted from the cameras after transfer to the laptop. No names will be attached to the descriptors of the film data                |
| <b>Data Protection</b>   |   |
| <p><i>4.10.1 Section 2.7 of the Code of Good Research Practice</i></p> <p>Research data must normally be retained intact for a period of at least ten years from the date of any publication which is based upon it. Investigators should be aware that specific professional bodies and research councils may require a longer period of data retention.</p> <p>Section 3 - The Data Protection Act 1998</p> <p><i>3.1.1 Personal data shall be accurate and, Personal data processed for any purpose shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose.</i></p> <p><i>3.1.2 Where necessary be kept up to date</i></p> | Personal details of participants will be removed from the laptop and any paper documentation will be shredded after the project is completed. The remaining data will be stored in accordance with the University recommendation. This will be reviewed on a regular basis.   |
| <p><b>Not from Roehampton University Ethics Application Guidelines 2010</b></p> <p>Ethical issues involving visual media (Bryman, 2012)</p>  | Issues of anonymity and confidentiality are somewhat transgressed by the use of video for data collection. It was explained to participants at the time of gaining informed consent that short film clips would be used for dissemination at conferences and other presentations. For any other purposes new permission would be sought   |

### 3.6.2 Informed Consent

Gaining voluntary informed consent is a guiding principle to research in the real world (BERA, 2004; BPS, 2009). Participants will be invited to 'opt-in' to the

studies (consent will be sought for each separate study) by means of the consent letter (Appendices A and B)

There are various issues to be considered with this study with regard to informed consent and they will be discussed briefly under the following headings:

- (I) Very young children as participants
- (II) ‘Vulnerable’ adults
- (III) Power relations within the Children’s Centre

#### (I) Very young children as participants

It is a contested area in terms of gaining consent from young children. Children may be seen as ‘unknowing objects’ of research. The observation study includes children who are unable to give informed consent. In this case the principles of respect and concern for doing what is right and treating the infant as a sensitive, dignified human being prevails. The informed consent of the parent/caregiver is gained in an ongoing capacity. However the child’s right to withdraw is honoured first and foremost (e.g. sleeping). With regard to other young children, they may be considered as ‘aware subjects’ able to consent to participate in the activity if it is clearly explained to them. It will be the researcher’s responsibility to inform the children in such a way that they can make an informed decision to participate (Alderson, 2004). The issue of confidentiality is explained in relation to disclosure of sensitive information.

Adherence to the setting’s Child Protection Policy will be maintained. Parents are asked to give their informed consent for their children’s participation. It will be important in this study to seek ongoing consent throughout the different phases of the research. The right to withdraw themselves and their data at any time will be made clear at each point that consent is sought.

## (II) ‘Vulnerable’ adults

High levels of literacy may be required to fully consent to participating in research. The world and language of research may be alien and unfamiliar. Terms such as; *research, conferences, journal publications* may need to be explained to enable consent to be given. The researcher produced a bullet-point checklist to give to all participants in clear, simple English and included clipart images to aid comprehension.

## (III) Power relations

Access to the participants came through the managers of the centres who were approached by e-mail in the first instance. This may present power relation issues for the researcher as she has gained access to all practitioners, children and parents through the most senior member of staff. Participants may feel they ‘have to’ agree to the interviews. The right to withdraw and not to answer any question was reiterated to each participant along with gaining their voluntary informed consent. Parents will also act as gatekeepers for their children as they will be participating with their children in the study – this may affect the children’s participation.

## 3.7 Summary

- This research project seeks to explore and understand the rationale for selecting parent-child music group activity in Children’s Centres and then to investigate what, if any, are the specific benefits and characteristics of music in this context. It is a largely un-researched area so the aim will be to explore and understand the topic.
- A multi-method strategy will assist in combining three phases of research with qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis
- This project aims to explore parents’ and practitioners’ attitudes towards music making by developing a questionnaire and then to investigate what the

specific benefits of music might be compared to art and outdoor parent-child group activities.

- The research is situated in a pragmatist philosophical paradigm acknowledging social constructivism. Priority is given to finding solutions to problems over the use of particular methods.
- Although useful for exploratory research this approach has its weaknesses with epistemological challenges and inconsistencies as a result of combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to be overcome.
- The sequential, exploratory strategy adopts a linear progression with findings from one study influencing the design of the subsequent studies.
- Study one utilised a standardised, open-ended interview schedule suitable for the generation of themes to establish a baseline rationale for music in Children's Centres. The open-ended questions allowed for individual perspectives to be given. Any researcher impact was overcome to some extent by the standardisation of the interview and keeping the interviewer responses to a minimum. Data were analysed using a grounded theory approach and frequency counts collected numerical information within the theme categories that added relativity to the qualitative findings.
- Study two sought to generalise the findings from study one to a wider sample of the population. Two questionnaires were designed; for parents and for practitioners using an online questionnaire tool. Parent participants were accessed via two online parent forums (some hard copies were also administered to parents at a Children's Centre), practitioners were invited by their Children's Centre manager – Children's Centres were selected to include; rural, suburban and city centre settings. A range of question types was designed to triangulate responses and gain relativity within and between the respective sample groups. Using an online questionnaire tool has advantages in terms of anonymity, ease of use, low cost, reaching a wide geographical spread of participants and reduction of human error in data handling.
- Study three was designed to allow the children's 'voice' to be included in the research, by observing and comparing children's behaviours in parent-child music, art and outdoor activity groups. It was a mixed-methods study with quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis included, to capture both the individual children and the group behaviours. Systematic and open observation techniques were utilised as well as interpretive and frequency count methods of data analysis.
- The Roehampton University Ethics Application Guidance was followed to ensure that informed consent and data protection issues were considered in an appropriate manner, with attention given to very young children participants and 'vulnerable' adults as well as the overarching power relation dynamic

## **Chapter 4**

### **Interview Study with parents and Children's Centre practitioners**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As the initial phase in an exploratory and sequentially designed project this study used open-ended questions and qualitative methods to generate themes freely and without constraint. Establishing why music is offered in Children's Centres was the primary guiding research question of this study and the findings provided the rationale for the design of phase two: the questionnaire study. The chapter begins with a report of the pilot study; participants; procedure; and findings. The next section deals with the main study in a similar manner with a concluding discussion and summary of the main findings.

#### **4.2 The Pilot Study**

This pilot study was a mini version of the main interview study to test the feasibility of the method, the adequacy of the interview schedule, and to rehearse the interview procedure. This preliminary qualitative interview pilot study established some tentative theme categories, clarified firstly the standardised interview schedule with some minor amendments to the wording of some questions, and secondly my role in the interview process.

What follows is a description of the pilot of the interview schedule followed by a description of the main study both of which took place between February and March 2011.

#### 4.2.1 *Aim and Objectives*

- To develop a series of open-ended questions in order to generate themes for a subsequent questionnaire.
- To test the effectiveness of the question schedule in generating themes.
- To standardise the interview process.

This pilot study, as well as testing the interview schedule for later use, gathered preliminary information about the role of music for participants.

The aims of the pilot study (as outlined in section 3.4.2, p.116) were to pre-test the interview questions to ensure that they gathered appropriate data and that they were comprehensible and clear to every participant. A small sample of the population was selected to ascertain the effectiveness of the questions. The pilot study also provided me with the chance to rehearse interview styles and techniques in order to establish a standardized approach for the exploratory interview study.

#### 4.2.2 *Participants*

Participants were recruited from a Children's Centre where the researcher had formerly worked as a music specialist. The location is a seaside town in the East of England and comprises three different Centre buildings situated in a council ward

ranked second in terms of indices of multiple deprivation for that county (choosesuffolk.com, 2011). The participants comprised 3 parents and 1 practitioner (a health visitor).

Permission to undertake the research study had been gained from the centre manager in advance and each participant's voluntary informed consent was sought at the time of interview (for the consent letter please see Appendix A). The parent participants were attending a 'messy-play' session and had volunteered for the interview the week before. Interviews took place in a pre-booked meeting room and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

#### 4.2.3 Procedure

Every participant was asked the same three general opening questions:

- Could you please tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind?
- Could you please describe any musical training you've had?
- What is your earliest musical memory?

All participants were asked the same final question:

- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

Each group was subsequently asked five or six questions, depending on the group.

The same questions were asked of different groups with the wording adjusted accordingly. For example; the parent group was asked: How do these sessions (music) influence your musical activity at home? And the practitioner groups were



asked: How do you think the sessions influence musical activity at home? In this way, similarities and differences in attitudes between and amongst different group members could be identified.

(I) Issues arising from the procedure

**Wording of the questions** - One issue arising from this study was the choice of wording for each question. Lee (1993) recommends using familiar words in questions as these can help respondents feel relaxed. In this study it was found that a balance needed to be struck between finding unambiguous, clear wording which may have seemed quite formal to some respondents and the use of colloquial expressions which may have been open to misinterpretation “How do these sessions influence your musical activity at home?” for example would be preferable to; “What do you ‘take home’ from the music sessions?”

The interview is a speech event and different dialects and linguistic styles can highlight the communicational and socio-linguistic aspects of this means of data collection. The potential for misunderstanding and misperceptions can occur where the language of the interview is not aligned with the language of the respondent’s view of him/herself (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). It became apparent during the pilot study that certain terms might have particular connotations for individuals e.g., ‘musical event’, ‘musical training’, and that particular responses might result from this. The interview was designed as a standardised event so I did not paraphrase the question for respondents if they sought clarification – this made it a structured rather than semi-structured interview. Respondents were invited to answer, or not, the

question as it was given. Every participant answered all the questions, some had no further comments to make when asked the final ‘Is there anything else you’d like to tell me?’ question.

**The role of the: “Is there anything else you’d like to tell me?” question** - This final question allowed for participants to add any information or comments. It overcomes, to some extent, the inflexibility of the standardized interview schedule, giving some scope for participants to talk about any aspect in more depth.

**The role of interviewer** - By piloting the interview schedule I gained confidence and experience in standardizing the manner in which the questions were asked – learning, for example, that it was not necessary to ‘drill’ for more information, but it was sufficient to let the questions provide the information for themselves. I was known to some participants, as both a colleague and music leader and levels of reciprocity may have led to responses that participants believe the researcher wanted to hear. The personal characteristics of the interviewer in terms of factors such as; age, gender, class, ethnicity, and perceived ‘seniority’ could also have affected the interview. It is the interaction between the two sets of characteristics those of the interviewer and of the respondents that affect the total interview situation (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

**Transcribing the interviews** - It can be argued that by transcribing an interview only some of the data is preserved, and it may be only a partial account of the event.

The non-verbal cues, tone of voice, and emotional timbre are all lost in the process of just writing down the words (Cohen et al., 2008). It was considered useful on this occasion to transcribe the interviews as the researcher gained valuable practical skills and also gained an understanding of what participants were saying and what the emerging themes might be. It also allowed for testing the reliability of the interview as an instrument for data collection.

#### 4.2.4 Results

As a result of the pilot study a number of changes were made.

##### (I) The interview process was standardized

I learned that to ask the questions simply and without bias was the best approach.

However, the interview is an inter-subjective experience (Laing, 1967) and it is impossible not to be influenced by the other person in a two-way interaction. Even though the wording and the order of the questions were always kept the same (Silverman, 1993), the tone of voice and affirmative nods could not be controlled. It must be acknowledged that the interviewer's personal style has an effect on the information contributed.

##### (II) Question one issue

The opening question for every participant was: "Can you tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind?" The intention was that this question would help the participant think about music from their own perspective and would get them talking. In this pilot study it did not prove to be particularly useful in gaining any depth of memory or intense personal experience, though it did prove to be a good 'warm-up' question. It was decided therefore to leave the question as it stood - even though the

term ‘musical event’ may have had particular connotations for some people – i.e., large-scale concerts.

#### 4.2.5 Initial emerging themes

During the transcription process it became clear that a number of themes were beginning to emerge that may have been able to inform the analytic framework for the main interview study. These themes were verified by a second peer researcher who was given the transcripts and asked to identify themes from her perspective. Although the precise wording selected for the codes varied in one or two cases for example, peer researcher suggested; ‘musical life at home’ to data that the researcher had coded as, ‘improving/increasing links to home’ we identified exactly the same themes from the transcripts as each other, as follows:

##### (I) Socialisation

“I think the socialisation is fantastic for her...just the participation of it.” Parent 2

“In the group setting there’s a lot of attention and then mixing with other children, other parents...” Practitioner

“Playing the instruments and joining-in...” Parent

“That’s good for me as well because we both join in together.” Parent

Socialisation was mentioned by every participant when asked about how children benefit from attending music group sessions. The social setting is perceived as beneficial for both child and parent in these responses. Music groups are often structured in such a way that the socialisation is ‘formalised’ in the sense that the

session is ordered in time and the songs, rhymes and musical material direct the flow of the sessions: the interactions are often coordinated in time.

## (II) Interaction between parent and child

“It’s fantastic for bonding and attachment and people who may be struggling to bond with their babies. Wonderful for a one-to-one, well it’s not a one-to-one it’s a group session ...to have that time where you don’t have to worry about housework and you can come to the Centre and do that...it’s a real special thing to do.” Parent

“Why I refer children to the group is because...in the daytime a parent might think how much time have I actually spent with my child today - maybe looking after their needs ...it actually focuses their one-to-one interaction time. Very positive, non-blaming. It doesn’t matter how good or badly you sing ...” Practitioner

“It’s interaction with your child.” Parent

Similarly, the ability of the group music session to promote interactions between parent and child was mentioned by every participant. Half the sample (n=2) referred to the group musical activity as providing an opportunity for special one-to-one interaction between parent and child.). Within the context of group activities permission is perhaps given for an intimacy and connection that the normal daily routine does not allow. Both of the participant responses above mentioned the time-consuming nature of housework and tending to children’s needs as possible reasons for the lack of specific one-to-one interaction in the daily routine. Using a song or rhyme for close interaction can also give permission for intimacy that might otherwise feel awkward or unnecessary for some adults.

### (III) Language skills and music

“We used to sing to him from when he was born and even now. My husband would sing songs, not necessarily nursery rhyme songs...now he knows all the words, everything...

I’ve noticed now rather than sing the tune he’ll hum...so he’s obviously getting to know the tune as well as the words.” Parent

“I think it’s brilliant for language development because of the beat and we do that at home, the rhythm.” Parent

Half of the participant group (n=2) mentioned the benefits of music in relation to language skills. This theme will be investigated further as the transferability of skills learned in music-making to other developmental outcomes in early childhood are often highlighted, anecdotally, as one of the important reasons for its inclusion in Children’s Centre programmes.

### (IV) Benefits for parents

“When we first started the group I was having a few panic attacks ‘cause we’d just moved here. So I felt a little bit self-conscious - it brought my confidence out again and I think that helped me as well as my child.” Parent

“I love it, really love it just to see him enjoying himself and it’s something you can take home and do with him and enjoy that as well.” Parent

“...parents talk positively about music as a whole and whenever you mention music groups they will always say; “Oh my little Fred will enjoy that.” Straight away it starts being positive and because music is in people’s lives somewhere I think they can relate to it. It’s for everybody.” Practitioner

Both parents and the practitioner in the pilot study alluded to positive benefits for parents as well as their children. One parent spoke about confidence and another the way music linked to positive experiences at home. The practitioner spoke of the usefulness in having music groups to recommend for families as she felt there would be a positive response, which assisted her in establishing good rapport with her client.

#### (V) Attitudes to teaching and learning

“...because you learn new things as well, new songs, new rhymes, and they stick with you...”

“...cause I know about music...we do it a lot in my work, I don’t want to sort of show I’m too confident so I step back a little. It’s very different coming to a group as a parent than delivering it.” Parent

“...so they’re modelling and copying at home what’s done in the group which will help develop their social interaction and attachment and things.” Practitioner

These responses seem to endorse the social learning environment as a positive one, where modelling and copying are seen as helpful approaches to learning about being a parent. Although the parent suggested that coming to a group as a parent was a different experience to leading a musical activity, which she did in her work as an early childhood practitioner. Perhaps there is a tension between dual identities of ‘parent’ and ‘professional’ in the group setting for this parent.

#### (VI) Increasing/improving links with home

“...we probably do more at home, play the CD in the car, do the songs at home. Then my mum came didn’t she and sings them even now.” Parent

“You’re singing them all day long aren’t you? And daddy does it as well, when he goes to work - so it’s really funny how your life changes.” Parent

Every parent in this study mentioned singing as part of the daily routine with their child. Two parents reported singing more as a result of attending music group sessions. The links to home and to other family members becoming more musically active as a result of the parent and child participating in music together at the centre will be a theme to explore further in the questionnaire study.

### **4.3 Main Interview Study**

The pilot study generated some tentative themes and enabled the interview process to be standardised. No major changes were made to the interview schedule as a result and the main study was conducted in a similar way to the pilot. Participants were recruited from an additional centre that did not employ a specialist music practitioner for the delivery of their music sessions, some of the parent participants in the main study did not attend music group sessions either. By including a range of participants the intention was to gather multiple perspectives and views of music activities. The aims and objectives of the study were as follows:

#### **Aims**

- To generate themes for the questionnaire



- To utilise the standardized interview schedule
- To generate themes from each participant group

### **Objectives**

- To explore the attitudes of parents and Children's Centre practitioners towards group music-making activities.
- To develop a questionnaire to explore and understand the rationale for music in Children's Centres.

#### **4.3.1 Participants**

Participants for the main Interview Study were recruited from two Children's Centres (Centres A and B) in East Anglia, UK. The researcher had worked at Centre A and Centre B was chosen because of its convenient location to the researcher's home. Access to the participants in both cases came through the managers of the centres who were approached by e-mail in the first instance.

Voluntary informed consent was sought from each participant at the time of the interview and the interviews took place in both settings in a pre-booked meeting room. The interviews were audio recorded, and some were transcribed for the assessment of their effectiveness at generating themes. Frequency counts were used to identify themes from the remaining data. Analysis was undertaken from both the raw audio data and the transcriptions. During the iterative process of analysis matrices of responses (some key words or summaries) from every participant were produced to identify useful quotations and clarification of the themes for each question.

There were 20 participants, all female. Only four parents were included in the main study sample, the pilot study had comprised three parents and one practitioner.

Recruitment of participants was organised by the centre managers. As both the pilot study and the main study findings contributed to the themes for the questionnaire study, it was felt that the views of seven parents across both studies was sufficient.

Although a male member of staff was employed at each centre neither was available to be interviewed for this study. Fathers do attend groups at Children's Centres but they are in the minority, and none was available to participate. Participants comprised:

- 4 Parents
- 6 Family Support Workers
- 3 Early Years Practitioners (1 Nursery Teacher working in a school setting, and 2 Early Years Practitioners (EYP) working in daycare settings)
- 1 Health Professional
- 3 Music Practitioners (1 Music Therapist and 2 non-specialist Family Support Workers)
- 1 Social Worker
- 2 Centre Managers

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Total 20

#### 4.3.2 Procedure

The interview schedule comprised between 10-12 questions per participant depending on the group, taken from a pool of 22 questions in all. Each participant was asked the same three opening questions as in the pilot study, as well as the concluding question: 'Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?'

Each interview was scheduled for a maximum of 20 minutes and most lasted between 12-15 minutes. I found it helpful to have a short chat with each participant before the interview took place to set them at their ease and to answer any questions they had about the research.

All interviews were audio recorded and voluntary informed consent was sought from each participant at the time of the interview. Data and audio materials were kept in accordance with the University of Roehampton's Ethics Application Guidelines (2010). The interview question schedules for each group may be found in Appendix C.

| Questions | Parents<br>n = 4 | Musicians<br>n = 3 | EYP<br>n = 3 | Other<br>CC<br>n = 8<br>6 family<br>support<br>workers,<br>1 social<br>worker,<br>1 health<br>visitor | Manager<br>n = 2 |
|-----------|------------------|--------------------|--------------|---|------------------|
| 1         | X                | X                  | X            | X   | X                |
| 2         | X                | X                  | X            | X   | X                |
| 3         | X                | X                  | X            | X   | X                |
| 4         |                  | X                  | X            | X   | X                |
| 5         |                  | X                  | X            | X   | X                |
| 6         | X                | X                  | X            | X   |                  |
| 7         |                  |                    |              |   | X                |
| 8         |                  |                    |              |   | X                |
| 9         |                  | X                  |              | X   | X                |
| 10        | X                |                    |              |   |                  |
| 11        |                  | X                  | X            | X   | X                |
| 12        | X                |                    |              |   |                  |
| 13        |                  | X                  |              | X   |                  |
| 14        | X                |                    |              |   |                  |
| 15        | X                |                    |              |   |                  |
| 16        |                  | X                  |              |   |                  |
| 17        |                  |                    | X            |   |                  |
| 18        |                  |                    | X            |   |                  |
| 19        |                  |                    | X            |   |                  |
| 20        |                  |                    |              | X   |                  |
| 21        | X                |                    | X            | X   | X                |
| 22        | X                | X                  | X            | X   | X                |

Table 4.1 Questions allocated to groups of participants

Questions were selected by relevance to individuals to ensure that taking part in the interviews was enjoyable and easy for participants. Certain questions were not relevant to certain groups. For example: Question 13 ‘How do you think the sessions influence musical activities at home?’ was only asked of those practitioners who were likely to have had practical experience of attending music groups i.e., musicians, family support workers, social workers and health practitioners.

### 4.3.3 Data Presentation

A thematic analytic approach was undertaken to generate the themes from the data. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.80) suggest that: “thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data.”

Quantitative research approaches require data to fit pre-decided codes. This was not possible in this instance since no previous research literature had been found to suggest the likely themes. The iterative processes involved in the data analyses are described in chapter 3. Below are examples of the attribution of coding themes.

| Participant           | Question (9) Why do you think parents bring their children to music groups? <b>Coding themes are in bold</b>   | Code  |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Musician              | “It’s good for the parents to develop some <b>self-confidence</b> about music. A lot of people, me included, <b>feel silly</b> singing in front of others. Parents want to <b>overcome</b> that so their children don’t feel that way. | <b>emotional:</b><br><b>musical</b><br><b>anxiety</b> |
| Musician              | “The <b>social</b> aspect. One of the groups I run the parents all <b>go out together</b> straight away and <b>spend time together</b> ”   | <b>social</b>   |
| Family Support Worker | “When you come to a group you have those initial <b>inhibitions</b>  | <b>emotional:</b><br><b>musical</b><br><b>anxiety</b> |
| Family Support Worker | “...but with someone <b>leading it</b> you relax and <b>get ideas</b> .”   | <b>modelling</b>                                      |
| Family Support Worker | “So it’s about <b>sharing</b> ... “  | <b>social</b>   |

Table 4.2 Examples of coding categories (words highlighted in bold signified the codes)

Some categorisations were straightforward but others needed an interpretivist approach where latent content is searched for alongside the manifest content, by probing beneath the surface to ask deeper questions about what is happening (Bryman, 2012, p. 282).

An example of this may be seen in this practitioner's response to a question about parents' reasons for bringing their children; "When you come to a group...". Rather than saying 'they' (as in the parents) she uses 'you' reflecting perhaps that she puts herself in the participant role. Perhaps she is expressing how she feels in terms of musical activity? Some responses incur seemingly contradictory coding themes. When parents were asked: 'How do you feel to participate as a parent in music group?' , two of the four parents said that they felt silly initially,

"...it's quite embarrassing at first but actually in time you think, this is quite good fun really...it reminds you what it's like to be a child." (**emotional/musical anxiety, emotional/good feelings**)

To the question: 'Why do you think music is included in the centre programme?' A family support worker replied,

"... a lot of parents and people in general find the whole music-thing embarrassing - so we try to introduce it as part of the groups so that people can see that it's fun, this is how your child learns, how they talk, it's a social thing. Sharing that experience. Feedback we get is always positive. They want more groups, more group sessions." (**emotional/musical anxiety, social, learning, demand and recruitment, emotional/good feelings**).

Within the analysis, codes were allocated initially according to key words, e.g. 'embarrassment' or 'fun' but in some cases an interpretive, more abstract theme such

as, emotional: musical anxiety or emotional: good feelings were eventually created which included several similar theme codes. These coding refinements took place as part of the iterative process of analysis. By re-visiting the interview data fresh thoughts and ideas based on reflection, further reading and thinking about every participant's responses to a question helped in refining and abstracting to the next layer.

Once the categories were clearly established, the method of frequency counts assisted in collecting numerical information within the theme categories. Frequency counts were used in content analysis to quantify text content in pre-determined categories, in this study the categories were not pre-determined but derived and generated from analysis of the data. The qualitative analysis of the data had the greater priority as it was the main method of analysis and was used to identify the emerging themes. To align the findings with those of the questionnaire study (Phase 2) all the Children's Centre practitioners including: family support workers, nursery staff, social workers, and health practitioners have been amalgamated into one group: 'CC' for the reporting of the data analysis. The other practitioner groups are: musicians and managers, along with the parent group.

#### 4.3.4 Reliability Study

To establish reliability to the coding structure in the main interview study an expert researcher independently analysed a sample of transcripts, selected at random using the theme category coding scheme for the data analysis. A reliability level of 89.6%

was achieved in her selection of the same theme categories as I had selected from the data. The final category titles were agreed together at a meeting.

#### **4.4 Main Study Findings**

The data will be presented according to the group of questions listed below:

- Why is music offered in Children's Centres? (Q.6, Q.7, Q.8)
- What do Children's Centre professionals consider to be the benefits of musical activities for families? (Q.9, Q.11, Q.13)
- What do parents/s consider to be the benefits of music for their children? (Q.12)
- Do parents/s benefit from attending music groups together with their children? (Q.10), and how does parental attendance influence musical activity at home?
- What do the musicians consider to be the benefits of music making with parents/caregivers and children? (Q.6,Q.9,Q.11)

Some questions provided additional contextual information for the research questions and will be presented as follows:

- Participants' musical memories and experiences
- Professionals' attitude to their work
- Issues arising from "anything else you'd like to tell me?"

##### **4.4.1 The first three questions**

The first question, with examples of responses shown below in Table 5 was used as a 'warm-up' question to get participants thinking about the topic of music before asking about the musical activities in the Children's Centre. As discussed in the findings from the pilot study the word 'event' seemed to conjure up certain sorts of musical occasions for several respondents. Parents and practitioner participants were



both asked the same opening three questions. Their responses to the first question are detailed below in tables 4.3 and 4.4

| Question 1: Could you tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind? - Parents |               |                |        |
|---|---------------|----------------|--------|
| Parent  | Entertainment | School-related | Family |
| Parent 1  |               |                | X      |
| Parent 2  |               | X              |        |
| Parent 3  | X             |                |        |
| Parent 4  | X             |                |        |
| Total   | 2             | 1              |        |

Table 4.3 Findings from Parent sample to question 1

| Question 1: Could you tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind? - Practitioners |               |                |        |          |
|---|---------------|----------------|--------|----------|
| Practitioner  | Entertainment | School-related | Family | Personal |
| CC 1  |               |                | X      |          |
| CC 2  | X             |                |        |          |
| CC 3  | X             |                |        |          |
| CC 4  |               |                |        | X        |
| CC 5  | X             |                |        |          |
| CC 6  |               |                | X      |          |
| CC 7  |               | X              |        |          |
| CC 8  | X             |                |        |          |
| CC 9  |               | X              |        |          |
| CC 10   |               | X              |        |          |
| CC11  | X             |                |        |          |
| Musician 1  |               |                |        | X        |
| Musician 2  |               |                |        | X        |
| Musician 3  | X             |                |        |          |
| Manager 1   | X             |                |        |          |
| Manager 2   | X             |                |        |          |
| Total   | 8             | 3              | 2      | 3        |

Table 4.4 Findings from Practitioner sample to question 1

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 (above) shows that half the participants spoke about music as entertainment as their memorable musical event:

“Take That in concert and George Michael, absolutely brilliant.” CC2

Four people related positive school experiences: “Playing in wind band at high school” CC 10

The Family theme category included items where parents or family were mentioned: “With my dad – Tina Turner ‘Simply the Best’. Sang and danced with my dad more important was the moment with my dad.” Musician 2

The Personal theme included responses that were about internal or individual musical reactions or experiences: “Sixteen, playing at the ‘Kit Kat’ ballroom in a band. It was my set and I flooded the floor with ‘Get Back” Musician

Although the use of the term ‘event’ may have influenced responses towards thinking about concerts and performances it was nonetheless a satisfactory general ‘warm-up’ question for the topic. Question two asked about any musical training the participants may have undertaken in order to gather background and contextual information about the participants and music.

| Question 2: Could you describe any musical training you’ve had? - Parents |        |        |          |      |
|---|--------|--------|----------|------|
| Parent  | School | Formal | Informal | None |
| Parent 1  | X      |        |          | X    |
| Parent 2  |        |        | X        | X    |
| Parent 3  | X      |        |          |      |
| Parent 4  | X      | X      |          |      |
| Total   | 3      | 1      | 1        | 2    |

Table 4.5 Findings from Parent sample to question 2

The analysis of the parents' data revealed that although two parents said 'none' as the first response to this question they continued with a qualifying statement:

"None..only school music." Parent 1

"None...just karaoke." Parent 2

Parent 2 suggests that karaoke in some way represents musical training. Perhaps this informal musical experience helps her learn about music as she engages in a fun activity.

Another parent mentioned school music: "School, played guitar and in the choir. Never really developed I wasn't very good at it." Parent 3 This was not a positive experience, this participant was left with feelings of not being good at music. Could it be perhaps that the shaping of our identity happens as we experience activities positively or negatively and we draw conclusions about ourselves through these experiences?

| Question 2: Could you describe any musical training you've had? - Practitioners |        |        |          |              |      |
|---|--------|--------|----------|--------------|------|
| Practitioner  | School | Formal | Informal | Work-related | None |
| CC1   |        | X      |          |              |      |
| CC2   | X      | X      |          |              |      |
| CC3   | X      |        |          |              |      |
| CC4   |        | X      |          |              |      |
| CC5   |        |        |          |              | X    |
| CC6   |        | X      | X        |              |      |
| CC7   | X      |        | X        |              | X    |
| CC8   |        |        |          | X            |      |
| CC9   |        | X      |          |              |      |
| CC10  |        | X      | X        |              |      |
| CC11  |        |        | X        | X            |      |
| Musician  |        |        | X        |              | X    |
| Musician  | X      |        |          | X            |      |
| Musician  |        |        |          | X            |      |
| Manager 1   |        |        |          |              | X    |
| Manager 2   |        |        |          | X            |      |
| Total   | 4      | 6      | 5        | 5            | 4    |

Table 4.6 Findings from Practitioner sample to question 2

Four of the practitioners mentioned school music in general terms, “I remember music from school, never learned an instrument.” CC3

Others spoke about formal music tuition, which sometimes took place at school, this was described as ‘formal,’ “Grade 5 flute and grade 1 keyboard and up to grade 3 music theory.” CC 9

The use of the word ‘training’ seemed to denote a formal, academic approach to music for certain practitioners as this data extract demonstrates:

CC 7: “None, don’t feel like I have had any formal training and yet music was part of infants and church choir. None of it feels formal and yet I would have been learning about music. Wouldn’t describe any of it as training. Only training was the class music lessons, talking about it, boring. Playing doesn’t feel like training.”

This appears to demonstrate the problematic nature of language. Although it is the primary medium through which social interaction occurs, and constitutes the basis of this study, it cannot be assumed that words are a transparent route to ‘reality’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Grayling (1988) cites Wittgenstein’s suggestion that the meaning of a word comes from its use. From his point of view it is important to understand the ‘language-game’ of the word’s original use. For the practitioner the word ‘training’ may have had particular connotations and meanings which were transferred to her understanding of music-experience in a particular way.

Wittgenstein speaks of the concept of ‘forms of life’ that is the frame of reference we learn to work within when trained in the language of our community. Learning the

language includes learning the outlook, assumptions and practices which are an inseparable part of the meaning of its expressions. Within interactions of this type, in this case a structured interview where the researcher was known to the participant as a musician, many factors may have influenced the way the questions were heard, interpreted and answered.

Informal music training was characterised in those data items where music was informally experienced, “Got my first guitar at 8 and taught myself to play. Taught myself drums and percussion.” Musician. This practitioner was a music therapist whose route into music-making had been entirely informal and self-initiated; playing in bands and song-writing as a means of acquiring musical skills and a musical identity, as suggested by North and Hargreaves (1999).

The work-related theme includes those data items where attending courses on early childhood music as part of their professional development was mentioned by participants, “Short sessions on music in early years. Short courses on benefits of music.” Manager 2

Of those practitioners who stated that they had received no musical training (n=4) two of them added that it was a sadness to them. Perhaps if one is not exposed to musical notions and ideas at an early stage of life there is a sense that it is too late and an opportunity has been missed. There may also be notions that music requires special training that has to be begun early. This participant mentions in answer to a

later question that every child should be given the opportunity to experience music - something that was missing in her early life.

Responses to the final question in this introductory series of questions revealed that family and school were the main sources of earliest musical memory, and Table 4.7 below shows the distribution of responses.

| Question 3: What is your earliest musical memory? – Parents |        |          |   |
|---|--------|----------|---|
| Parent  | School | Personal | Extract   |
| Parent 1  | X      |          | “At school...First performance at school: Oliver – “I’ll do anything” |
| Parent 2  | X      |          | “In assembly using cymbals, triangle.”                                |
| Parent 3  | X      |          | “I remember learning to play the guitar...”                           |
| Parent 4  |        | X        | “I suppose as a teenager..pop music.”                                 |
| Total   | 3      | 1        |   |

Table 4.7 Findings from Parent sample to question 3

| Question 3: What is your earliest musical memory? – Practitioners |        |        |          |        |
|---|--------|--------|----------|--------|
| Practitioner  | School | Family | Personal | Church |
| CC1   |        | X      |          |        |
| CC2   |        | X      |          |        |
| CC3   |        |        | X        |        |
| CC4   | X      |        |          |        |
| CC5   |        |        | X        |        |
| CC6   |        | X      |          |        |
| CC7   |        | X      |          |        |
| CC8   | X      |        |          |        |
| CC9   |        | X      |          |        |
| CC10  |        |        |          | X      |
| CC11  |        | X      |          | X      |
| Musician  |        |        | X        |        |
| Musician  |        | X      |          |        |
| Musician  |        | X      |          |        |
| Manager 1   |        |        | X        |        |
| Manager 2   | X      |        |          |        |
| Total   | 3      | 8      | 4        | 2      |

Table 4.8 Findings from Practitioner sample to question 3

The Family: parents and siblings, appeared in responses from half the practitioner sample: “Dancing round my living room to Enya with my Mum. Really relaxing and calming.” Musician

“Me and my brother, put on dad’s records, danced around the lounge. Roger Whitaker whistling, laugh about that.” CC1

The sharing of the musical experience with loved ones seemed to provide an extra dimension to the music. In the items above the musician adds that the experience was relaxing and calming and CC1 that she and her brother laughed, both provided a supplementary piece of information that adds emotional significance to the memory.

Even the school memory for one practitioner linked to her mum who still has a picture of a happy moment for this participant:

“Playing the recorder at first school – group of six of us, and my mum still has the picture” CC 9. Indeed the picture may have made this an easier memory to recall for this participant rather than any other early musical memories.

Singing songs in church was mentioned by two participants and might be characteristic of a transfer of culture and sense of belonging to groups outside the family that can be mediated by musical experiences. Knowing the songs in a church or other religious or community gathering may help in feeling that we belong or have a home. This may be particularly true if families are dislocated from their country or place of origin.

There were also individual, personal experiences of the phenomenon of music that were telling: “... walking in the countryside realising I could make up my own songs...not very old about six or seven, experimenting.”

This participant’s statement seems to demonstrate the internalisation of higher psychological function. She knew what songs were, in order to be able to make up her own. She seems to have internalized a cultural form of behaviour, and her own ‘inner’ music has been created. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that the internalisation of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology (1978, p.57).

Each of these general questions has identified themes of ‘family’, ‘school’ and ‘personal’ as being significant in memorable musical experiences for all participants.

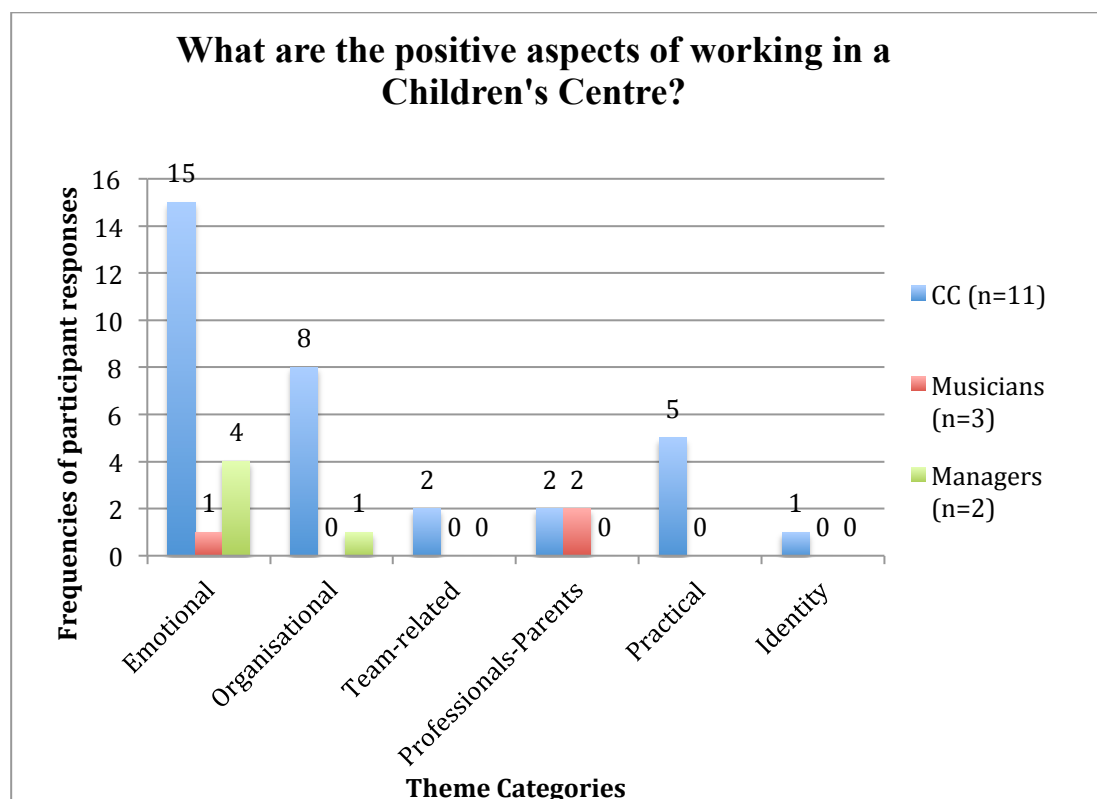


These themes seem to support the socio-cultural nature of musical learning and development. These opening three questions provided some background to the main body of the interview. They allowed the participants to prepare themselves mentally for the topic and to think about the subject of music in relation to themselves and their family and situation

#### 4.4.2 Practitioners' attitudes to working in a Children's Centre

Questions four and five asked practitioners to comment on the positive, and the negative aspects of working in a Children's Centre to ascertain the attitudes and motivations of practitioners about their work and their working situation.

Figure 4.1 Frequencies of participant responses by theme categories to: What are the positive aspects of working in a Children's Centre?



| Theme Categories       | Example of participant responses  |
|------------------------|---|
| Emotional              | <p>“It’s rewarding. You always get something back and you can see the progress that you’re contributing to.” CC 9</p> <p>“I can see the differences we’ve made for families.” Manager 1</p> |
| Organisational         | <p>“Children’s Centre non-hierarchical structure means I am close to the ground...” Manager 1</p> <p>“amount of training and support...” CC 5</p>   |
| Team-Related           | <p>“I love working in the Children’s Centre, the team I work with, wanting to provide the best for families and children.” Musician 2</p>   |
| Professionals -Parents | <p>“I care as much about the parent, if you can encourage/lift the parent you lift the child...” Musician1</p>  |
| Practical              | <p>“I can have a useful conversation with the mother because everything’s here - toilets, water and toys for the children.” CC 10</p>   |
| Identity               | <p>“Being part of the community but be an observer as well...Having that role within the community, within the centre.” CC 2</p>  |

Table 4.9 Examples of participant responses within theme categories: Positive aspects to working in a Children’s Centre

Figure 4.1 and Table 4.9 above show that deriving emotional satisfaction from working with families, feeling that one can make a difference, was an important positive aspect of working in a Children’s Centre. The non-hierarchical structure of the organisation enabled the manager to see the difference that was being made for families, as she felt “close to the ground.” The organisational aspects contributed to the positive emotional experience. Similarly the positive practical provision mentioned by the health practitioner (CC10) seemed to contribute to her work feeling more effective or “useful” as she described it.

The ‘Identity’ code data item is interesting, the practitioner lives in the local community yet she articulated that her professional identity allowed her to detach

herself in some way from the community in which she lives, gaining a different perspective from that detached position. She defined her position as ‘observer’- that seems to suggest that she is able to reflect, think about and come to some conclusions about what she sees in her work. Children’s Centre personnel are frequently recruited from the local community and there has been a tradition of training family support workers to work in the community in which they live.

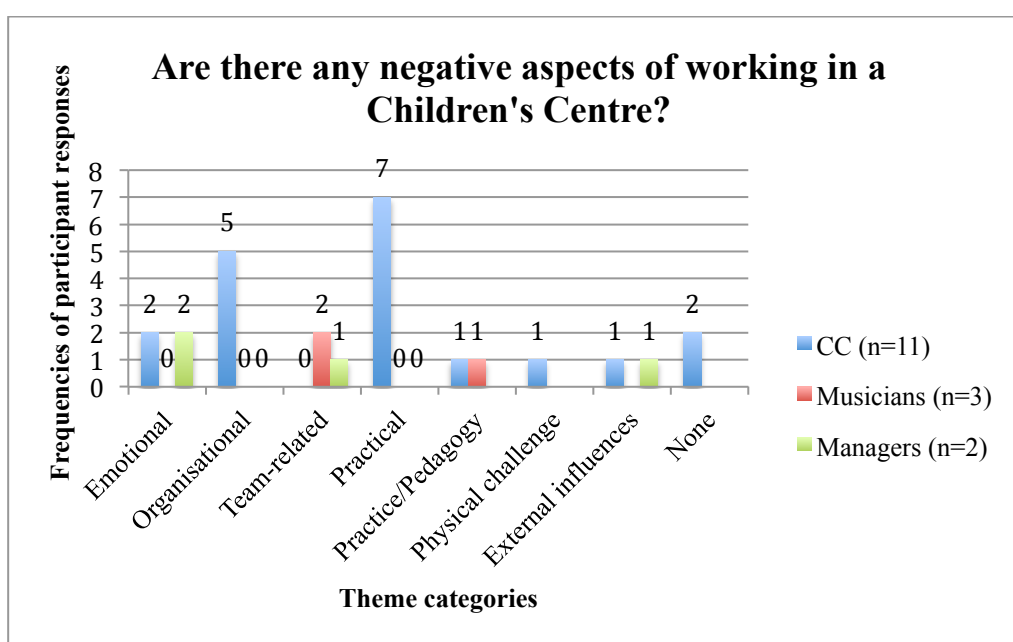


Figure 4.2 Frequencies of participant responses to theme categories to: What are the negative aspects of working in a Children’s Centre?

| <b>Are there any negative aspects to working in a Children's Centre?</b> | <b>Example of participant responses</b>   |
|--|---|
| Emotional  | "Lots of challenges can be emotionally very difficult and very tiring..." CC 5  |
| Organisational   | "The rules and regulations of service providers...creates a barrier." CC 4  |
| Team-related   | "Not everyone singing from the same hymn sheet...can be frustrating the perception that CC people are not doing proper work. A negative that's hard to overcome." Manager |
| Practical  | "Amount of paperwork can get in the way." CC 5  |
| Practice/Pedagogy  | "Managing the disruptive behaviour and keeping the group together." Musician  |
| Physical challenge   | "I'm older, it's a physically demanding job...I get more tired." CC11   |
| External influences  | "There's always an issue with numbers – health and safety, due to us being a smaller centre." CC 1  |
| None   | Response to - any negative aspects?   |

Table 4.10 Examples of participant responses within theme categories: Negative aspects to working in a Children's Centre

Comparing the responses from both the positive and negative aspects to working in Children's' Centres questions the findings suggest that emotional satisfaction is important to these participants. It was the practical aspects of their work that were perceived both positively and negatively in almost equal quantities. Paperwork was seen by several participants as sometimes unnecessary and taking time away from the aspects of the job that they enjoyed and found fulfilling. It could also be that mentioning paperwork is a fairly neutral topic, as it does not criticise any internal

aspects of the Children's Centre directly. The need to keep up-to-date with paperwork is almost an 'external force' with no culpability attributable to an individual as are 'rules and regulations' or 'health and safety'. It would seem that although sometimes emotionally challenging, work with parents and families is the source of greatest satisfaction for practitioners.

#### 4.4.3 Participants' attitudes to Children's Centre services

To ascertain the strength to which participants identified with various aspects of the Children's Centre activities both parents and practitioners were asked if they had to cut services which activities would they save.

Figure 4.3 Frequencies of practitioner responses to question 21: If you had to cut services which activities would you save?

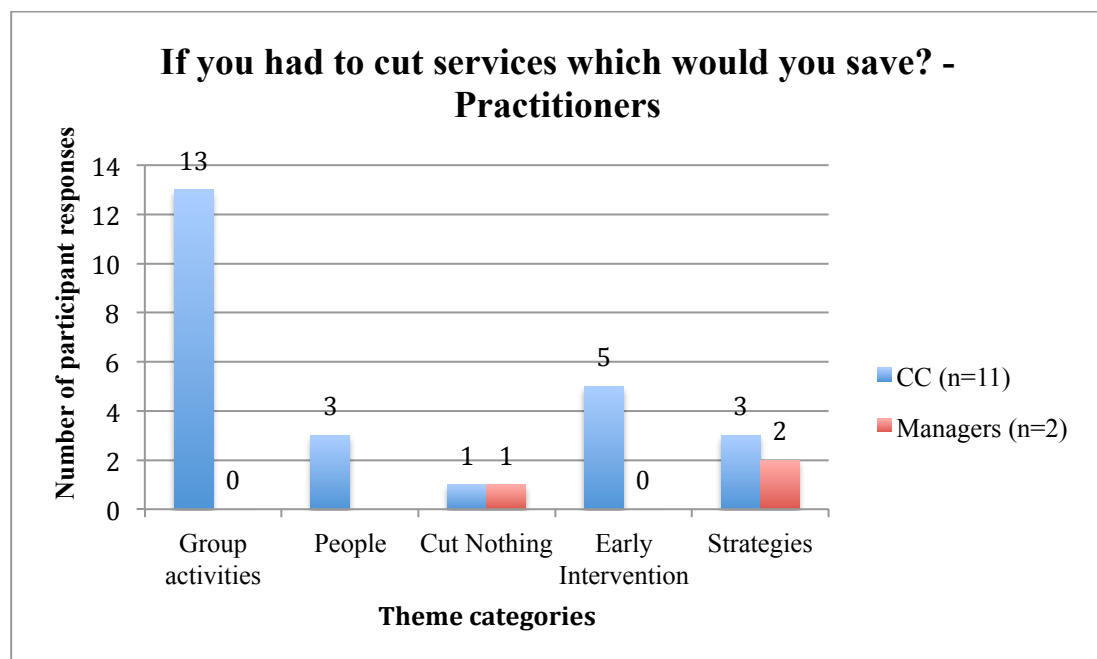
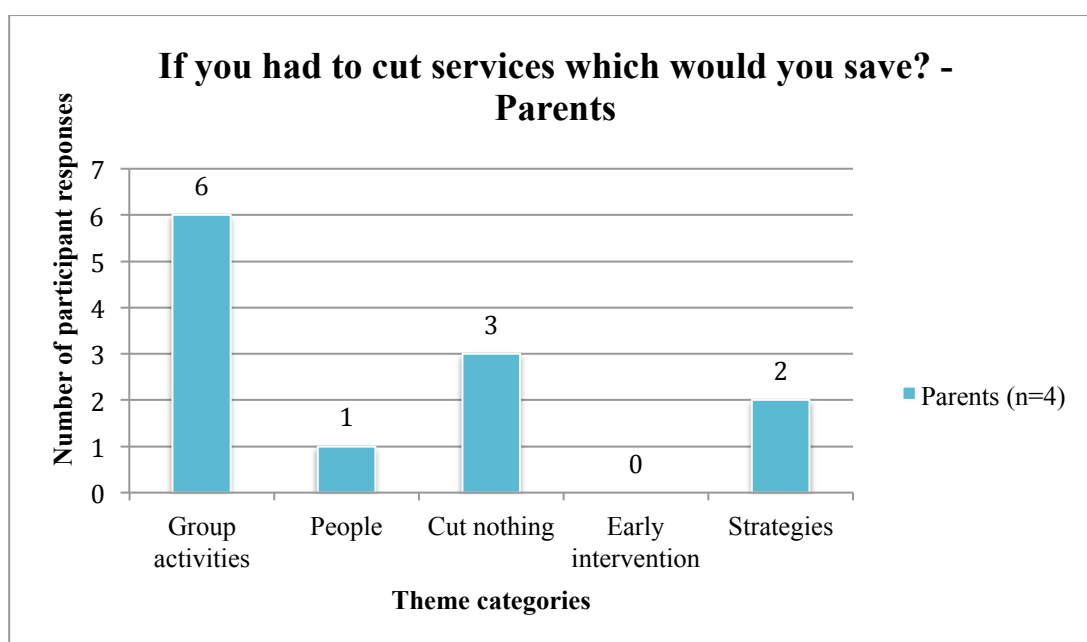


Figure 4.4 Frequencies of parent responses to question 21: If you had to cut services which activities would you save?



When comparing the parent responses to those of the practitioners it appears that parents are more concerned with not cutting services: Four parents produced three responses as compared with only two responses in this theme category from thirteen practitioner participants.

“...I wouldn’t want to cut anything to be truthful with you I think they’re all really good in different ways.” Parent 1

This is perhaps to be expected because these parents attend the centre and were willing to be interviewed so are likely to feel positively about the services that are provided. They did not mention the early intervention support that some of the practitioners found valuable.

“Oh goodness! Well I think we have to save anything that really promotes that relationship, that attachment in the best ways. So I think the workers would need to be saved so they can carry on doing the outreach work with families.” CC 7

Half of all responses related to group activities. These included music groups, messy play and outdoor activities - some responses just mentioned 'groups',

"I find that doing the activities because the parent gets involved as well...it's a lifeline a lot of the time for the parents to come and speak to other parents, to feel they're not on their own." Parent 2

"I think definitely the groups need to be saved. There is this big hooah about targeting groups or universal groups. What I personally find difficult is how do you target? Because what is a needy person? Because you could be really well off but there could be a lot of domestic violence going on or you could be so isolated and not getting out. So, it's very difficult. So I think some sort of universal groups need to stay." CC 4

In the data extract above (CC4) the practitioner alludes to the debate about universal and targeted group work. When the interview took place (2011) changes in the remit of Children's Centres recommended targeting particular groups of disadvantaged families over universal activities for all families in the local community. The move from a 'core offer' to a 'core purpose' seems to be articulated by this practitioner as an erosion of the 'progressive universalism' that was at the heart of Sure Start Local Programmes and her difficulties in assessing who should be targeted. Being 'in need' of support and advice could be a universal requirement of all new parents and with changes in social and cultural contexts many new parents are not living in close proximity to extended family and may rely heavily on the services that an inter-professional centre can provide, irrespective of what may be considered 'need'.

Parent 2 speaks of meeting with other parents as being a lifeline, to feel that she is not on her own, perhaps she is articulating this universal ‘need’ of most new parents.

A response from one practitioner reflects the ethos of parents’ needs driving the content of the programme: “ you need to keep whatever service it is that is most needed by the people, who need it the most. It’s so dependent on who you have using the centre at the time and what groups are most popular.” CC 5

The managers, who had to think about the question from a practical viewpoint, both came up with strategies in their answers.

“...But I think what we’re trying to do here is think creatively about reducing the amount of worker time. As I think you know we have a number of community parents co-running groups. I wouldn’t want to cut music out but I might have to cut it down” Manager 1 **(Strategies)**

“I guess what we would do is not cut any sessions but reduce the number of them...because they all have their individual value...” Manager 2 **(Strategies)**

Having gained background contextual detail from all participants, the interview progressed to those questions that dealt specifically with parent – child musical activities. To introduce the topic parents were asked about their infants’ first reaction to music.



#### 4.4.4 Infants' first reactions to music – Parental responses

The purpose of this question was to give parents the chance to think about their children in relation to music and to focus their attention particularly on how their children reacted to sounds and music. The aim of this question was to focus-in on the topic (their child and musical activities) as a way of introducing the research questions.

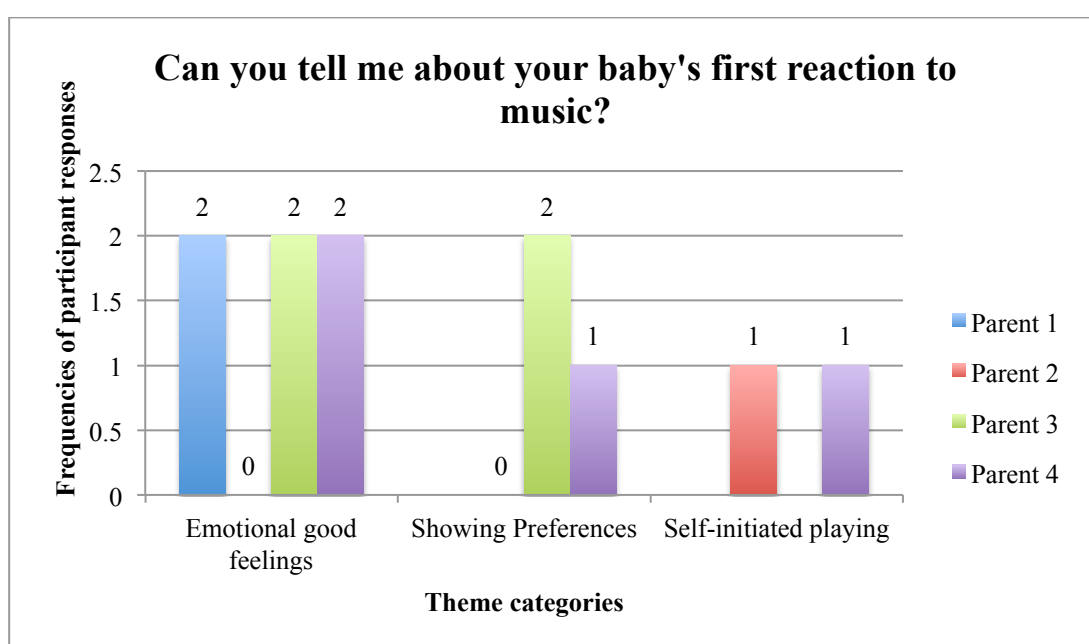


Figure 4.5 Frequencies of responses to question 15: Can you tell me about your baby's first reaction to music?

The most popular response by far related to baby's emotional reaction to music (two-thirds of all responses), the following examples are typical

##### (I) Emotional/good feelings

“She kept laughing, she thought it was really funny,” Parent 1 and; “My youngest – he just giggles, thinks it's great” Parent 4

## (II) Preferences

Other responses indicated that parents could tell, from their baby's reaction to music, what they liked to listen to. These comments (like the examples below) seem to show how attuned parents are to their baby's listening and musical preferences,

“When really little I tried snippets of classical music ...to see what interested them. Drums interested them a lot...interested in pieces of music with not a lot of singing in them and a drum beat.” Parent 3

Another parent noticed that music heard in the womb soothed her baby:

“Played music when I was pregnant. My husband played Black Sabbath and my first - she used to go to sleep to Black Sabbath.” Parent 4

## (III) Self-initiated playing

The active participation in making sounds was mentioned by one parent: “As a baby he'd hit instruments and if he liked it he'd hit it harder and harder.” Parent 2

These data indicate that music is enjoyed as a distinct phenomenon by babies and infants, many of these responses are consistent with prior research evidence of newborn and infant musicality.

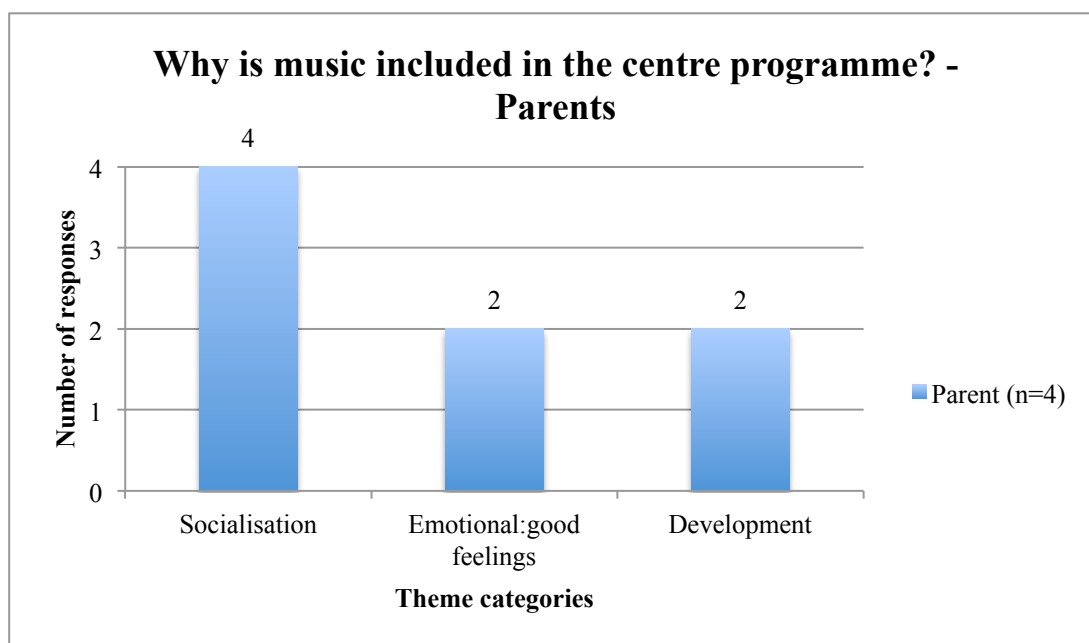
The next section addresses the findings related to establishing the rationale for parent-child music activity groups in Children's Centres.

### 4.4.5 Why is music offered in Children's Centres?

This section reports the findings from questions six, seven and eight, which were specifically designed to answer the first question of my research study: Why is music

offered in Children's Centres? The parent findings are presented first, with responses focused on three themes as can be seen in figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6 Parents' responses to: Why is music included in the centre programme?



Most important for this sample of parents is the social benefits for their children in attending music group activities.

Parent 2 identified that musical activities are different from 'normal' groups, with music encouraging joint interaction, whereas children do activities alone in the other groups:

"It is to bring children out of their shell. When they come into a normal group they are just doing activities alone or with their parent but with the music a lot of them interact with each other more. Copying each other and helping them integrate in a group together." Parent 2 (**Socialisation**)

This parental perception of the social benefits of music are found in research literature too, in particular the significance of the inter-personal dimension for

musical awareness for young children (Papoušek, 1996; Street, 2006; Trehub et al., 1997b; Trevarthen, 2005; Young, 2005b), the intersubjective nature of musical interactions enables an empathetic shared meaning without words that can help a child's early expressions and emerging language. This may also contribute to positive feelings, the emotional benefits of music were mentioned by half the parent sample (n=2).

“...It brightens everyone up. ..It's a ‘feel good’ just being happy.” Parent 1

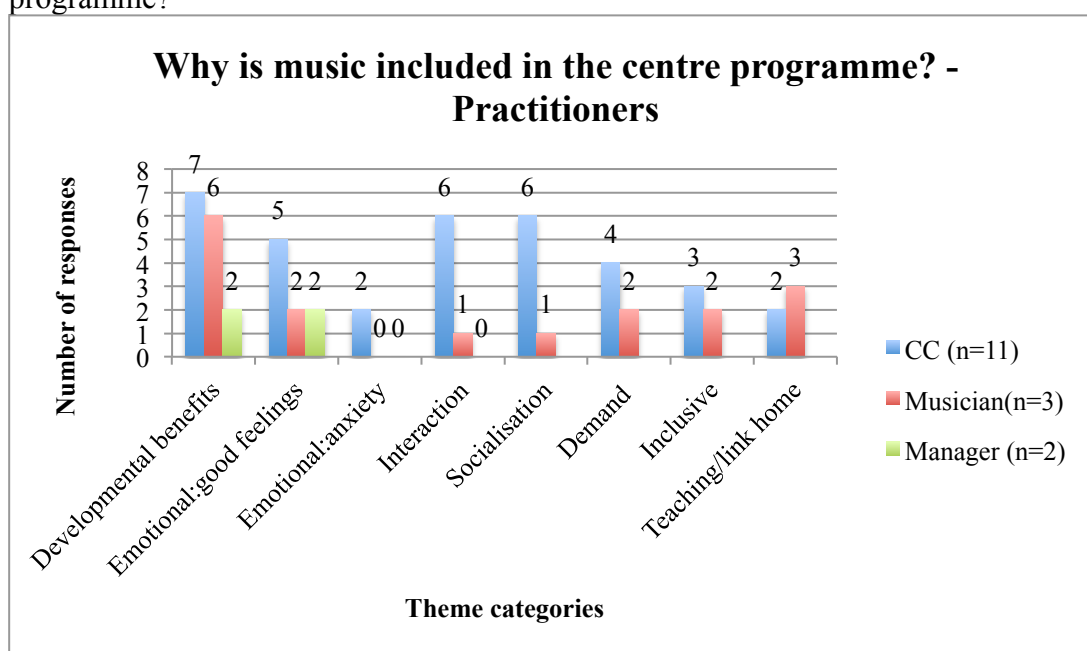
**Emotional:good feelings.** The positive reactions to music that parents remembered in their babies is also found in their children as they get older, this parent may also be commenting on her own positive feelings associated with attending the group.

“It's creative because it helps with development, because that's what they do as part of national curriculum or something...” Parent 3 **Development and learning**

Parent 3 demonstrates her awareness of music as a creative aspect of the National Curriculum, although she goes on to say, perhaps expressing hesitancy in supporting this view: “ But what's the benefit, everyone can join in with simple songs. Messy Play and music are everywhere aren't they?”

The findings from the analysis of the larger group of practitioners' data reveals a wider range of theme categories as compared to the smaller parent group as Figure 4.7 shows

Figure 4.7 Practitioners' responses to: Why is music included in the centre programme?



Standley et al's (2009) study of the effects of parent/child group music activities on toddler development found that the young children were capable of highly structured group involvement at a level that was beyond the normal expectations of children of this age. She also found parents to be eagerly involved with their children during the music sessions. One practitioner's response from my data seems to echo Standley's et al.'s finding about the structured nature of music groups.

"It's nice interaction, it's structured...the children learn and remember stuff from it"

CC3

In fact learning and development was the most popular reason with practitioners for including music. The data extracts below show how valuable music groups are perceived to be for child development.

“Music is proven to be good for children’s development and for communication. If it wasn’t included we’d be greatly missing out on development.” Musician 3

It’s good for development: numeracy, counting, movement – for their brain development, language. It ought to be compulsory. In socially deprived areas music is particularly helpful: no time, no money. Middle class areas pay for classes and mixing with other middle class parents can be intimidating. Here it’s egalitarian.”

CC10

The latter extract hints at the wider remit of Children’s Centres to provide services free at the point of delivery so that all may participate and benefit from activities, something she describes as ‘egalitarian’, an aspiration that learning and development opportunities should be available for everyone in early childhood (prior to statutory education) regardless of their ability to pay for them. This practitioner also acknowledges that mixing with other middle class parents might not be easy for everyone who attends a Children’s Centre. Hey and Bradford (2006) found that an ideology of middle class parenting was prevalent amongst parents in Sure Start settings, and was considered by many as the appropriate model. Many parents whose parenting practices differed from the accepted model felt intimidated and were reticent about attending.

Rogoff’s (1990, p.110) definition of *culture* includes “the organized and common practices of particular communities in which children live (which may differ from those of children’s nations).” Different *cultures* may value different goals of

development – “the lessons to be learnt”(ibid., p.110). The egalitarian approach of the Children’s Centre may accept differing parenting styles and *cultures*, but it could also be that they try to inculcate an accepted model of parenting by offering the sessions free of charge so that all may attend and be influenced by the prevalent *culture* and parenting style.

One participant identified the cultural element of music: “ It [music] is essential. It’s a huge part of life and culture, wherever you come from.” CC6

‘Interaction’ - parent and child together – was also identified as a theme from the data. A musician mentioned notions of ‘communicative musicality’(Trevvarthen and Malloch, 2000): “It’s very communicative without talking, you can express yourself - without talking, it’s an excellent medium for taking the fear out of being in a group” Musician 1. She perceived that this may help when joining a group .

Other responses were more general about socialisation and interaction benefits:

“Gets them socialising and music is such a good way, gives a one-on-one time, no need to interact with other members of the group.” CC7

Music is viewed as making one-on-one interaction possible within a group context, the socialising aspects appear multi-dimension - at a group level and a dyad-level. This will be explored further in the questionnaire study. By attending a group musical activity some parents may be able to provide an experience that they might find difficult to facilitate by themselves at home. This perhaps alludes to inhibitions or the perceived need for special skill/knowledge about music, or perhaps permission

needed to share intimate parent-child moments. It seems that there may be benefits for parents as well as children in attending the music activities which the questionnaire study will seek to explore further.

Barbara Rogoff speaks of ‘guided participation’ as the process by which children acquire new skills and problem-solving abilities as they participate in meaningful activities alongside parents, adults or other more experienced companions (Rogoff, 1991). Perhaps parents might utilise the ‘more experienced companion’ in the form of the music leader to assist them in their relatively new social and cultural role of parenthood. Standley et al., (2009) noted that caregivers in their study began mimicking music leaders’ cuing and guided assistance methods as they participated in music group activities with their children. Scott-Hall’s (2008) study found that participation in a music group activity helped with maternal feelings of isolation and helped not only the parent-child interaction but also that with the wider group of participants.

Two CC participants suggested that there may be barriers to be overcome by parents in attending music groups in particular:

“A lot of parents and people in general find the whole music, singing-thing embarrassing, so we try to introduce it as part of the groups so that people can see that it’s fun.” CC2 (**emotional:anxiety/ emotional:good feelings**)

It is unclear from this extract whether the practitioner feels anxious herself about singing or perceives anxiety in parents. The questionnaire will seek to uncover more



about this theme by asking parents whether they feel anxious about attending music groups, whether it is because they are nervous of groups or nervous about music and the same question to practitioners.

Demand for music groups and recruitment to the centre were also found as themes within the practitioner data:

“Feedback we get is always positive, they want more groups, more sessions.” CC2

“Everyone can access it and get something from it, and families want it. Music is being queued-up for, the universality of it.” CC9

“It’s a brilliant way of getting families in- they feel welcome and comfortable and can find out about other sessions.” Musician 1

Music was seen as universally accessible too and the inclusive aspect was mentioned in five responses:

“Something like Messy Play activity you need to be a certain age to experience, but with music from before birth can be absorbed.” Manager 2

“Babies love it and children with special needs, it really helps them. CC11

The manager in this item speaks of the benefits of music from before birth - she goes on to speak about the developmental benefits of music. This non-specialist manager is well-informed about infant musicality and values music for its learning and developmental benefits. An issue for her might be that she would have to find money

to pay for a specialist music practitioner to come into her centre, in this case she does not need convincing or informing about the benefits of music.

The findings from the analysis of this question indicate that the answer from the parents' perspective to why music group activities are included in the Children's Centre programme are firstly social - for themselves and their children, also mentioned were the emotional and developmental benefits. From the practitioners' perspective a range of themes were found in their responses. The learning and developmental benefits of music was by far the most popular theme with fifteen responses across every practitioner group (CC, musician and managers). The emotional: good feelings theme was also mentioned by every group of practitioners. What the data analysis of the practitioner sample revealed was the dual aspect of socialisation: one-to-one between parent and child, and amongst group members. This will be explored in the questionnaire study to see what a larger sample of parents and practitioners perceive about these two aspects. An issue of overcoming a barrier to participation in music activities was found in the practitioner analysis and this too will be investigated further; whether it is anxiety about music, or groups in general, or indeed whether it is the practitioners that feel anxiety themselves about music.

#### 4.4.6 Benefits of music

This section of findings aims to answer research questions two and three:

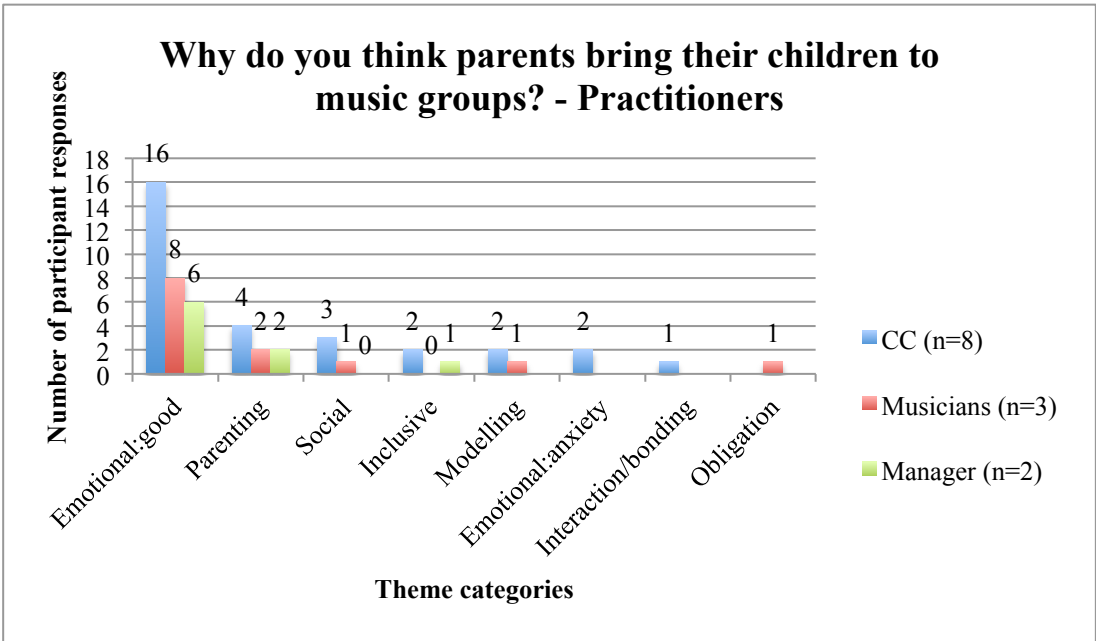
Research Question 2. What do Children's Centre professionals consider to be the benefits of musical activities for families? (Q.9, Q.11,Q.13)

Research Question 3. What do parents/s consider to be the benefits of music for their children?(Q.12,)

### Practitioners’ attitudes

Practitioners’ perceptions were explored through two questions: ‘Why do you think parents bring their children to music groups?’ (Q.9); ‘In what ways do children benefit from music? (Q.11). The former gauged practitioners’ perceptions of parents’ attitudes and the latter their direct opinion of the benefits of music for children.

Figure 4.8 Findings from the Practitioner sample to Question 9



Although practitioners suggested that the developmental and learning benefits of music were important reasons for including music in their centre programmes of activities (Figure 4.7), they indicate here (Figure 4.8) that they perceived parents’ motivations for bringing their children to the groups as emotional first and foremost: “From very young noticing that their children enjoy music. They bring them because

they think they [children] will enjoy it and when they get there they find they [parents] enjoy it too.” CC7

“Maybe because they have an enjoyment of music themselves. Maybe it lifts their mood as well.” Manager 1

This appears to be an interesting difference in perception between their reasons for including music activities in the centre programme and their perceptions about parents’ reasons for attending. Although several practitioners acknowledge that parents know about the benefits of music as a reflection of their parenting skill:

“More and more parents are realising just how important music is. What it can achieve without being obvious.” CC1

“Parents are interested in their children’s learning and music is an aspect that supports learning.” CC5

The social aspect was not perceived by practitioners to be as strongly important to parents as the emotional benefits to be derived from attendance, it was only found four times in the data analysis of this question, the following item is an example:

“...Because it’s a group where they meet people and they do become good friends.” CC3

The remaining theme categories were found in fewer data items: 3 data items were found of the inclusive nature of musical activities, and 3 data items relating to ideas modelled that could be used at home by parents. The initial inhibitions to joining-in with group musical activity was found in two data items and finally in one data item

respectively were: one-to-one interaction and parents feeling they had to attend the group music sessions. Overwhelmingly the practitioners in this sample believed that parents bring their children to music groups because of the emotional good feelings that music gives.

Practitioners were next asked about the ways in which children benefit from music and the findings from this question echo the findings from question five, (Figure 4.7). The reasons for including music in the centre programme appear to be aligned to the benefits of music for children.

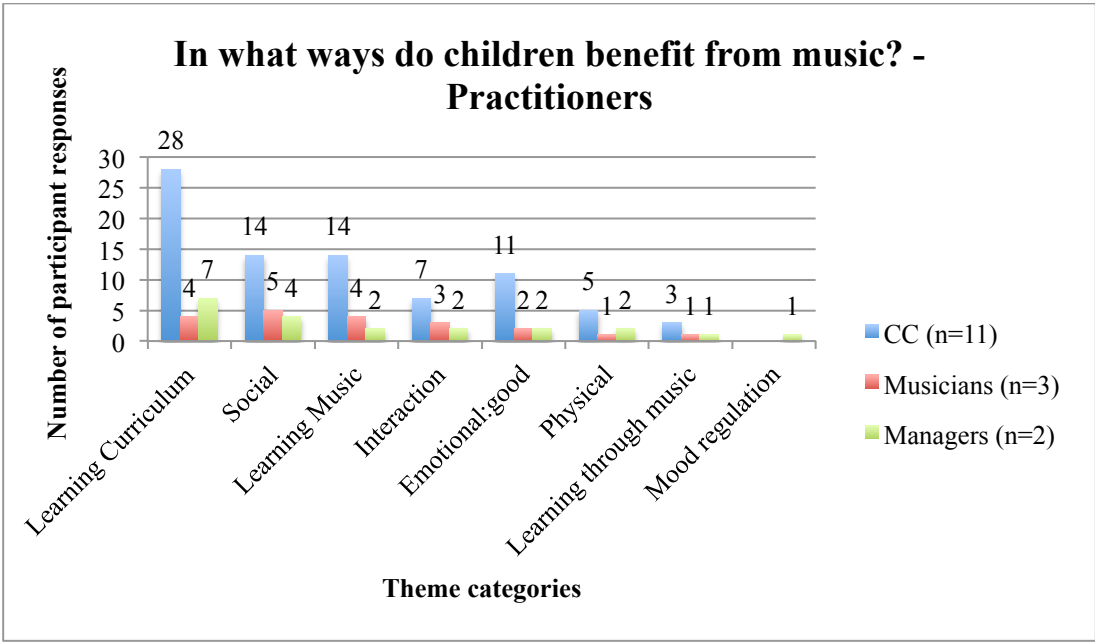


Figure 4.9 Findings from Practitioners to question 11

Figure 4.9 shows that a large number of responses from practitioners included items about children’s overall learning (Learning: Curriculum). There were 39 separate data items on this theme category, although one practitioner mentioned six different curriculum areas in her response with each receiving one count in the analysis. The

social benefits were found 33 times in the data and Learning about music appeared 30 times. Participants went into more detail in their responses to this question than some of the other questions hence the higher number of responses in some of the theme categories. This might be an indication of strength of feeling or it may be a topic that they feel comfortable talking about in more detail.

This data extract is an example: “Relationships skills, turn-taking. Socialisation greatly increased. Playing together. Communication and language skills. Moving freely.” Musician 3 (**Social, Interaction, Learning: Curriculum, Physical**)

There appeared to be two main strands in the data analysis of this question: those responses concerned with the learning and developmental benefits for children, and those of one-to-one interaction with parents, and the positive emotional benefits. Although the Learning: Curriculum items received many counts and were mentioned by most practitioners this other strand of topics also occurred frequently and the lower frequency counts may not be a sign that it was less important.

“They socialise through singing and dancing together. The children with additional needs can join in. It makes them feel good. We do movement too so it’s helping with their health too.” (**Social, Inclusive, Emotional:good feelings, Physical**)

In conclusion, practitioners in this sample were well aware of the learning benefits of music to the curriculum, they also perceived that there were emotional benefits and parent-child interaction benefits that the music group provided. Music was thought to be an inclusive activity that enabled learning about music and also facilitated other developmental benefits such as strengthening children’s communication through music. Only one of these practitioners was employed as a music specialist and yet

the knowledge and understanding about how music might help young children's learning was overwhelmingly expressed by all participants. It seems from these findings that training for non-specialists may not need to be focused heavily on the benefits of music but perhaps more about the pedagogy of leading musical activities and basic theory of music. The questionnaire study will investigate whether the wider population of practitioners support these practitioners' perceptions.

### Parental attitudes

Question twelve aimed to discover parental attitudes to the benefits of music for their children. Table 4.11 below shows the findings of the parent sample

| Question 12 Can you tell me about things that happen in the session that you think are really good for him/her? -Parents |          |          |          |          |       |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| Theme categories   | Parent 1 | Parent 2 | Parent 3 | Parent 4 | Total |
| Social   | XX       | XX       | XX       |          | 6     |
| Learning: Music  | XX       | XX       |          |          | 4     |
| Mood   | X        |          |          | X        | 2     |
| Learning: Curriculum   | X        |          | X        | X        | 3     |
| Physical   |          |          |          | X        | 1     |
| Enculturation  |          |          | X        |          | 1     |

Table 4.11 Findings from Parent sample to Question 12

The parent sample data analysis revealed that socialisation was perceived as a benefit by three out of the four parents. This data extract is typical: “ The group coming together, making new friends, new people. We made friends from when she was 4

months. Even though we don't go to the same groups any more we're still friends.

Big impact.” Parent 1

‘The group coming together’ is perhaps indicative of sharing a sense of belonging or ‘communitas’ that Turner (1982) describes as a group shared experience of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), which enabled friendships to blossom and endure beyond the lifetime of their attendance at the same groups. Through the group experience there was the chance to develop friendships that have made a big impact for this parent. Music enables shared moments in time so that individual experiences are in-tune with one another and the affect experience is perhaps enhanced and positive feelings increased.

The experience of moving geographically with young children and yet finding the same songs in different locations was helpful in enabling one parent’s twin two-year old children to join-in, providing continuity and an affirmation of cultural stability (“comfortable, continuity”) when many things were changing: “Takes time to join-in – socialisation, sharing, comfortable when music is around, continuity in different places. I’ve lived in three locations in UK since our 2-year olds were born it’s familiar...” Parent 3. The theme category of ‘enculturation’ was attributed to this data item and although this parent travelled within the UK there may be families who travel further afield and for whom music can be a continuous thread that is comfortable and reassuring of who they are and their culture. Similarly the standard ‘repertoire’ of children’s songs and rhymes that appear from this item to be ubiquitous in Children’s Centres may be helpful for those families who are seeking to learn about British culture.



The parent and practitioner samples differed in their perceptions of the benefits for children in attending the music group sessions. For parents the social benefits were most important and for the practitioners the learning benefits were highlighted.

The subsequent questionnaire study will seek to generalise these findings to a wider sample of the population.

#### 4.4.7 Benefits to parents

Research question four seeks to explore any benefits to parents in attending the music group with their children. The four parents were therefore asked how they felt to participate in the music group (question 10).

| Question 10: How do you feel to participate as a parent in music group? Parents |          |          |          |          |       |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| Theme categories  | Parent 1 | Parent 2 | Parent 3 | Parent 4 | Total |
| Observing role  | X        | X        | X        | X        | 4     |
| Emotional:good feelings   | X        | X        | X        |          | 3     |
| Emotional:anxiety   |          | X        | X        |          | 2     |
| Parental challenge  |          |          | X        |          | 1     |

Table 4.12 Findings from Parent sample to Question 10

An unexpected finding from the data analysis was the observing role that parents enjoyed through their music group participation. It was the most frequently mentioned theme category and was found in every parents' data extract:

“Love it, watching them all laugh and dance and smile, seeing them develop, learning the songs...absolutely love it!”(**Observing role, emotional/good feelings**)

“”They get involved, I can take a step back and relax it’s a fun thing to do...”  
(**Emotional/relaxation, emotional/good feelings**)

Music activities are often ‘led’ by a practitioner, following a loosely structured outline, and this may allow for parents to step out of their parent role for that short time as someone else is ‘in charge’. Many activities at Children’s Centres are planned as free-play activities with an informal atmosphere, yet parents must supervise their children throughout these sessions and their role is clearly that of ‘parent’. Perhaps the identities are more fluid in the music group. Both the parents in the extracts above combine the observing role statement with a positive emotional feeling (“it’s a fun thing to do”, “absolutely love it”) so it seems to be something they appreciate.

The data analysis also revealed mixed emotions about attending the music groups.:  
“At first I found it silly (laughs) but only because I have to stand up and everyone is looking at you. At first I thought, I’m not sure I like this, but as the weeks have gone on it’s brought my confidence out a lot more...” (**emotional/ anxiety, emotional: good feelings**).

This theme was also found in practitioner data from other questions. It is not clear from these data whether participants are nervous about groups or about music and this will be included as a theme in the questionnaire to try to add further to these initial findings.

The parent of twins had a particular perception: “Difficult being a twin mum everyone’s watching what you’re doing because they’ve got one and you’ve got two. A lot of the songs require you do something with your child I have to find a way to do that with two. They’re asking people to repeat a song twice so that I can do it with the other so I always feel a little bit like an oddity in that sort of group. I do enjoy it though I am relaxed, I look forward to it.” Parent 3

It may be helpful to repeat songs more than once in a music session from a pedagogical point of view and the twins may not be the reason why practitioners are choosing to do this, but it is interesting how the parent of twins interprets and feels when songs are repeated. She feels that everyone is looking at her because she has two children and they have one. The number of children that parents bring to groups will be included in the questionnaire design.

#### 4.4.8 Parental attendance – Musical practices at home

Findings from prior research suggest that musical activities may influence musical activity at home (Young, Street, and Davies, 2007; Morris, 2013) and the pilot study findings also produced a ‘links to home’ theme category. Both parents and practitioners were asked how the sessions influenced musical activity at home. The theme categories that were found through the data analysis were similar in both groups of participants although subtle differences were found. The findings from the parent sample can be seen below in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Findings from Parent sample to Question 14

| Question 14: How do these sessions influence musical activity at home? - Parents |          |          |          |          |       |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| Theme categories   | Parent 1 | Parent 2 | Parent 3 | Parent 4 | Total |
| Increased singing  | X        | X        | X        |          | 3     |
| Increased links to home  | X        | X        | X        |          | 3     |
| Modelling/teaching/learning  | X        |          |          | X        | 2     |
| Mood regulation  | X        |          |          |          | 1     |
| Not attended groups  |          |          |          | X        | 1     |

Increased singing was found in all the data from the three parents that attended music groups at their Children's Centre: "Songs, come up with different verses, useful for distracting the children." Parent 3. "We sing all the songs, dance about." Parent 1

Links to home were reflected in those data items that specified using ideas from the session at home: "Use what we've learned in the sessions, using the materials." Parent 1, and "I remember new things and we practise new songs at home. " Parent 3.

The joint participation of parent and child in the group session facilitates the sharing of music at home in ways that a young child participating alone with peers might not be able to share at home as effectively. The socio-cultural learning is enhanced by the parental presence in the sessions as the musical repertoire can be more easily incorporated into the family culture because of the adult – it does not remain part of children's culture it can be embraced as family culture.

The data from the parent who did not attend the music group shows that she utilises technology for her children's musical activity: "Use 'Just Dance' for the wii and they dance around." Parent 4. Perhaps the 'acceptable' music activity at the Children's Centre does not suit the *culture* of music making in this participants' family culture.

Previous research studies (Young, 2008; de Vries, 2008; Lamb and Maines-Beasley, 2013) also found that the music in the home of many young children was diverse and included the use of technology that may not accord with the classical Western or folk traditions of some of the traditional music group sessions.

Table 4.14 Findings from practitioner sample to Question 13

| Question 13: How do you think the sessions influence musical activity at home? - Practitioners |                   |                         |                              |                 |                                 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Practitioner   | Increased singing | Increased links to home | Modelling/ teaching/learning | Mood regulation | Parents more attentive to child |
| CC1  | X                 | X                       |                              | X               | X                               |
| CC2  |                   | X                       | X                            |                 |                                 |
| CC3  | X                 | X                       |                              |                 |                                 |
| CC4  |                   | X                       |                              | X               | X                               |
| CC5  | X                 | X                       |                              |                 |                                 |
| CC6  |                   | X                       | X                            |                 |                                 |
| CC7  |                   | X                       | X                            | X               | X                               |
| CC10   |                   | X                       | X                            |                 |                                 |
| Musician   |                   | X                       | X                            |                 | X                               |
| Musician   | X                 | X                       |                              | X               |                                 |
| Musician   | X                 | X                       |                              |                 |                                 |
| Total  | 5                 | 11                      | 5                            | 4               | 4                               |

Five of the practitioners also felt singing increased at home as a result of attending the groups, “Parent take the songs home and do them with babies.” CC5

All the practitioners believed that increased musical links to home were achieved by the group sessions, “Parents buy props, downloading music and having CD’s in the

car. Using music as a medium for engagement, participation, interaction, communication, attachment and fun.” Musician 1

The musician perceived that the impact of the music group permeates the daily lives of some of the families she works with, seeing music as a medium for family enjoyment through the list of benefits in the extract above.

There was an additional theme category found in the practitioner data, that of parents becoming more attentive to the children at home because of the music group sessions, “But it’s the emotional music that is carried on at home. The connection, tuning-in and emotional space.” CC7 and from CC1, “Giving their child time at home and tuning-in to them...” In spite of the fact that it is a group activity, the music group provides models of interactions that are intimate and one-to-one between parent and child, that can be rehearsed and practised at home, as the parent sample findings also suggested. (“We practise new songs at home.” Parent 3)

#### 4.4.8 Musicians’ attitudes

The following section explores the research question: What do the musicians consider to be the benefits of music-making with parents/caregivers and children?

Percentage responses from the three musicians were aggregated across the three interview questions:

- ‘Why is music included in the centre programme?’ (Q6)
- ‘Why do you think parents bring their children to music groups?’ (Q9)
- ‘In what ways do children benefit from music?’ (Q11)

The findings revealed that nearly a quarter of responses included the **Emotional: good feelings** theme (24%). **Social** aspects and **Interaction** (16%), **Learning: music** (13%), **Developmental benefits** (10.5%) and **Inclusive** aspects (8%). The remaining themes were less popular (**Learning: curriculum**, **Parenting**, **Obligation**, **Modelling**, **Emotional: musical anxiety**) and each of these themes occurred in around 3% of responses.

The musicians' aggregated responses seem to differ from the whole practitioner group perceptions about **Learning: curriculum** benefits that were revealed in findings from question 11, for which this theme appeared in a quarter of responses from the whole practitioner group (shown in Figure 4.9). Conclusions cannot safely be drawn from this however as the musician data is combined in this instance and is compared with data from one question alone. As the data were investigated using frequency counts, the links to the curriculum received high scores in question 11 as some participants mentioned several curriculum areas when responding.

#### 4.4.9 A 'typical' music session

##### (I) Findings from musicians

Musicians were asked to describe a typical session - data were quite evenly spread amongst the themes. The largest number of responses was concerned with spontaneous music either improvisation from the music leader or supporting a child's spontaneous music. All 3 musicians interviewed have informal music backgrounds. One was a music therapist with a professional background of playing in bands, the other two were both family support workers who regularly ran the group music

sessions at their Children’s Centre. One of the latter was also training to be a play therapist.

| Question 16: Tell me about a typical session - Musicians |            |            |            |       |
|--|------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Theme categories   | Musician 1 | Musician 2 | Musician 3 | Total |
| Spontaneous music  | X          | X          | X          | 3     |
| Instruments  | X          | X          |            | 2     |
| Familiar songs   |            | X          | X          | 2     |
| Structured   | X          | X          |            | 2     |
| Props  | X          | X          | X          | 3     |
| Hiding games   |            | X          | X          | 2     |
| Use of puppets   |            | X          |            | 1     |
| Try to avoid ‘samey’                                     | X          |            |            | 1     |
| Security of the familiar                                 | X          |            |            | 1     |

Table 4.15 Findings from musicians – A ‘typical’ session

**Supporting spontaneous music** was the most frequently mentioned element, one musician saying:

“...I try to incorporate reflecting and responding to the children in my instrumental work....Play therapy has helped me do the music.”

another musician commented:

“...improvisation, or instruments, then have song choices.” Clearly the musicians here are suggesting sessions that have a fluid and flexible ethos, responding to the desires and needs of the group.

However it appears that a **Structured format** may also be helpful in shaping the session:



“Welcoming/hello song, then key favourites, action songs like; Row, row your boat, for attachment. Social song like; passing the ball. Then; What shall we do with a bouncy baby, Peepo, hiding games, lycra – Teddies on the bed, children hiding. Musical instruments, ask parents for suggestions of songs... End with a Goodbye song.”

Music leaders in early childhood may have a variety of backgrounds, interests and experience. It is a completely unregulated area in which to work, with freelance music practitioners and ‘in-house’ professionals engaged in planning and delivering musical activities for families. The diverse backgrounds of the music leaders may influence practice in Children’s Centres, the questionnaire will investigate who leads musical activities and what sort of musical activities they choose. Results may signal implications for policy and practice

## (II) Findings from other Practitioners

Those CC practitioners who had direct contact with families (i.e. family support worker, social worker, health professional) were asked about any music they might use in their work.

| Question 17 Tell me about any music you use in your work – CC Practitioners |                    |                  |                |                     |      |
|---|--------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|------|
| Practitioner  | Use of instruments | Playing audio CD | Familiar songs | Written information | None |
| CC1   | X                  | X                | X              |                     |      |
| CC2   |                    |                  | X              |                     |      |
| CC3   |                    | X                |                |                     |      |
| CC4   | X                  | X                | X              |                     |      |
| CC5   | X                  | X                |                |                     |      |
| CC6   | X                  |                  | X              |                     |      |
| CC7   | X                  |                  |                | X                   |      |
| CC10  |                    |                  |                |                     | X    |
| Total   | 5                  | 4                | 4              | 1                   | 1    |

Table 4.16 Findings from practitioner sample to Question 17

“It really depends on the situation and the group that I am running. I only run the ‘young parents group’ at the moment and some of them will engage with the music and well, I’ve seen dads hiding behind the cabinets when we’ve done the music... Sometimes it’s even difficult to get them to sit in the area we’re sitting in cause their anxiety about it is quite high. We do have music on in the sessions...” She went on: “... Sometimes we’ve put some instruments out - that’s quite effective, that’s much more, they can lead it then. Sometimes when you have someone trying to lead a session, then it’s frightening for them - They’re quite often families that have disengaged from school and things - that hasn’t worked so well.” **(Use of instruments and Playing CD)**, Family support worker:

This extended extract reveals the complexity of the Children’s Centre context as a learning environment. Working with vulnerable adults and their children means that activities have to be negotiated and navigated according to who attends and the atmosphere on the day. As a result perhaps different methods and approaches are

being found to enable tentative adults to lead and experiment with sound makers with their very young children that they might never otherwise have considered doing.

#### 4.4.10 The final question

Every participant was asked if there was anything else they wanted to tell the interviewer at the end of the interview. 13 out of 20 participants added some final information. Table 4.17 shows the themes and the percentage of responses for each theme.

| Theme                                  | Number of comments by category |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Positive value of music                | 10                             |
| Importance of music in the early years | 7                              |
| Impact on practitioners                | 2                              |
| Pedagogy/teaching issues               | 2                              |
| Tensions in perceptions                | 1                              |
| Music helps in assessing state of mind | 1                              |
| Value of visiting musician             | 1                              |
| Desire for more ‘creative’ mad stuff   | 1                              |
| No comment                             | 7                              |

Table 4.17 Number of comments and emerging themes from ‘Is there anything else you’d like to tell me?’ question

The most frequent additional comments were to reinforce what had already been said in the course of the interview about the value of music:

Parent 3: “No..just like I say I’m really helped and it’s really helped (Name of child) like she spoke from young and I know the music had something to do with it because of all the songs and the interaction together and I think it’s a very good thing....” **(Positive value of music, Importance of music in early years)**

Tensions in perceptions of the role of music groups came from a comment by a musician about the challenges she faces in terms of pressure from her manager to move group members out of the group because of the need for others to join, not knowing how to do this effectively and perhaps not feeling that they are ready to move on. As the musician she has concerns for her group members and their development/progress whereas the manager has organisational and other concerns. There does not seem to be a shared perception about how the group operates nor who has the power and control in deciding when someone is ready to move on from the group:

Musician 1: “So it’s always difficult to know how to move sessions on and how to discharge people...the powers that be are saying, ‘they need to move on, that’s too big a group’ but they’ve now bonded as a group, so how are we going to split that up ..and none of them are old enough to go to the toddler group.” **(Pedagogy/teaching issues, tensions in perceptions of music groups)**

#### **4.5 Discussion**

These interview study findings established the emerging themes for the rationale of music groups in Children’s Centres to be used for further exploration in the subsequent questionnaire study. In the pilot study the benefit of music to language skills emerged from the data analysis, and this broadened out to include benefits to other areas of learning in the main study findings as a strong reason to support music activities in Children’s Centres. The Music Start Project found that early years practitioners surveyed in their study also focused on the learning benefits of music (Clift et al., 2006). Research reviewed in Chapter two of this thesis (section 2.4.3) indicated that engaging in musical activities in early childhood benefits other

learning areas, in terms of: spatial-temporal reasoning (Gromko and Poorman, 1998; Bilhartz et al., 1999), cognitive, IQ improvement (Schellenberg, 2011; Schellenberg and Weiss, 2013); phonological processing and early word use (Anvari et al., 2002; Eastlund Gromko, 2005); communication of emotion, empathy (Rabinowitch et al., 2013) and enhancement of non-verbal skills (Boone and Cunningham, 2001).

Parents and practitioners differed in what they perceived to be the benefits of music groups for children. Practitioner participants were naturally concerned with making a difference to children's learning and development as preparation for school is an outcome that they may well be working towards in the activities they provide. It is therefore unsurprising that responses included links to the curriculum, some of which were articulated strongly and positively in the interviews. It is pleasing that non music-specialist practitioners could see and praise the potential of music in benefitting other areas of the curriculum. However, the belief in the power of music as a learning tool for other subject areas does little to promote music for music's sake and continues to support its inclusion because of its usefulness to other subject areas. This is a prevalent discourse in early childhood music education where, the justification for 'buying-in' the services of music practitioners may be based on language and literacy or the social and emotional development gains for young children. Music practitioners highlight these benefits as this helps in getting work, and so the cycle is perpetuated.

Parents were more concerned about the social and emotional reasons for attending the music group activities. Prior research (reviewed in this thesis section 2.4.3) indicates that group music making assists with social behaviour (Kirschner and

Tomasello, 2009, 2010); music group activity was found to increase emotional empathy scores (Brown and Sax, 2013) and develop social-emotional capacities in children (Rabinowitch et al., 2013). Young (2003b) suggests that early music making is social-musical: her research found that children played the longest with instruments when a familiar adult played with them.

Practitioners and parents both raised the emotional good feelings that resulted from participating in the music group, and this seemed to be a key aspect of the emerging rationale for offering and attending music group sessions. Scott-Hall's (2008) study of parents attending music in similar settings also found positive emotional reactions in her findings. Gudmundsdottir (2010) found that all parent participants in her study, irrespective of their age group, scored higher than expected in measurements of subjective mental well-being.

It appears that links to home are occurring as a result of the parent and child participating together in the group sessions. The parent's presence allows for the songs and ideas to be absorbed by the adult and thus reinforced at other times. If the very young child has the experience alone, although the developmental and social benefits derived from the music session may still occur for that child, there may be no opportunity for reinforcement and integration and the shared emotional experience to be built upon. Such a child is unlikely, because of her developmental stage, to have the communication skills to explain and demonstrate the learning that may have taken place and if the parent has no knowledge/experience of the sessions, any actions or attempts by the child at vocalising the songs may get overlooked or

ignored by them inadvertently. Their attendance with the child will allow for any such attempts to be noticed and supported.

Increased singing at home was a finding from both the practitioner and the parent sample and supports prior research findings reviewed in this thesis (section 2.6) on musical parenting (Custodero et al., 2003b; Custodero and Johnson-Green, 2008 ; Ilari, 2005; Ilari, Moura, and Bourscheidt, 2011) that suggested that singing to be the primary activity between parents and young children at home. Young (2008) argued that mothers used singing to soothe and distract children and also because it was fun and made children happy. Ilari (2011) found that some Brazilian mothers who took part in early childhood music education programmes with their children sang and did the activities from the lessons at home.

In addition to establishing a rationale for exploration in the next phase of this research, information has been gained about the communities of practice in Children's Centres. Although introductory in nature the opening questions for practitioners about the positive and negative aspects of their work revealed some interesting findings that relate to multi-professional working practices and the evolution of a community of practice. Wenger (1998) suggests that 'mutuality' is vital to participation in a community of practice. This 'mutuality' is concerned with shaping each other's experience of meaning (recognising something of themselves in the other). Participation; "...can involve all kinds of relations, conflictual as well as harmonious, intimate as well as political, competitive as well as cooperative." (Wenger, 1998, p. 56)

One respondent's comments related to her participation in establishing mutuality in her team: "Trying to manage that joined-up working when all coming from slightly different places and the emotions that get caught in that."

A job of 'brokering' is often necessary to translate, coordinate and align elements of one professional practice into the 'community' (Wenger, 1998, p.109), until it becomes integrated into the shared repertoire or discourse. There is an emotional cost in relinquishing parts of one identity and taking on the new one that may be required as part of the mutual engagement necessary to the community of practice, as Anning et al., found in their study of multi-professional teamwork (2006, pp. 65-66). They found that exhorting practitioners to work together in a 'joined-up' fashion did not wash away the reality of status and hierarchical barriers. They encountered; "a complex interplay of change and resistance, of difference and conflict." (2006, p. 106), finding that co-location and daily interactions could reduce perceived barriers but also exaggerate difference and hierarchy. The participants in my research have highlighted neither difference nor status as a negative aspect to their work. Perhaps the 'joined-up' approach to integrated working has had time to embed in Children's Centres since Anning et al's. (2006) research and professional identities are now more secure. The leadership style of individual managers may also contribute to practitioners' perceptions and to increased contentment in their roles.

Similarly, the introductory question to parents produced some interesting information that supports results from previous research reviewed in this thesis. The parents'



recollections of their children's first reaction to music were: the soothing and calming effects of music (Polverini-Rey, 1993; Standley, 1998); evidence of hearing in the womb (Lecanuet, 1996; Lecanuet and Schaal, 2002; Woodward and Guidozzi, 1992); and demonstrating musical preferences in infancy (Corbeil et al., 2013; Ilari and Sundara, 2009; Plantinga and Trainor, 2009). These 'real world' parental experiential data confirm what has been found from experimental studies conducted with infants.

The themes that have been revealed in this study will be used in the design of the next. The unexpected findings such as the observing role that parents appeared to enjoy and the ambiguity of the emotional: anxiety theme will be explored more fully in the next phase. Similarities and differences identified between the perceptions of parent and practitioner samples will be explored. The quantitative design of the questionnaire study will allow for statistical comparisons between and within groups which may add and augment understanding about the rationale and benefits of music group activities for parents and children.

## Chapter 5

### Questionnaire Study

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study represents phase 2 of the 3-phase research project and follows the Interview Study (phase 1), which has revealed the themes for further exploration within this questionnaire study. The interview study adopted qualitative methods, using open-ended questions within a standardised schedule to generate the themes to be explored here in greater detail. The purpose of the first study was to establish a rationale for parent/carer and child music groups in the Children's Centre programme of activities offered to families.

Taking the theme categories revealed by the interview study was the starting point for the questionnaire design. These themes were; **Social, Emotional, Learning, Teaching, Links to home, Musical, Parenting and Organisational**. Some of these categories comprised different aspects, for example the **Social** category included social benefits for the child and social benefits for the parent. Questions were designed to explore both aspects so that the results would enhance and augment the findings of the Interview Study.

The study comprised two questionnaires (Appendices D and E): one for parents, and one for Children's Centre practitioners, and the data analyses were conducted on both sets of data separately, as well as on the combined data set, with the aim of generalising the findings to a greater proportion of the population.

## **5.2 Method**

### **5.2.1 Questionnaire Design**

The design of the questionnaire included items to gather information from participants that would help to answer the research questions and to gain greater clarity and depth of understanding from the two groups of participants about the theme categories generated by the interview study, namely:

- What sort of music making takes place in a Children's Centre?
- How does the Children's Centre music group influence musical activity at home?
- Who attends Children's Centre music groups? What is the typical gender and age of adults and children?
- How many children do carers bring to music sessions?
- Does the age of the adults make a difference to their responses?
- Does the age group of the children affect adults' responses?
- Does the number of children they bring make a difference to their responses?
- Does attending music group activities lead to an increase in confidence in parents' musical ability?
- Is there an embarrassment/inhibition barrier to be overcome by parents attending music groups with their children? – If so, is the inhibition connected to fear of groups or fear of music?

Table 5.1 below shows the questionnaire question numbers and the themes to which they relate for both parent and practitioner groups separately:

| <b>Theme Categories Parent</b> | <b>Question Number</b>                           | <b>Theme Categories Practitioner</b> | <b>Question Number</b>  |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Descriptive                    | 1,2,3,4,5  | Descriptive                          | 1,2,4   |
| Background                     | 6  | Background                           | 3   |
| Social                         | 7c,d,g,<br>29a,b,<br>32a                         | Social                               | 5c,d,g,<br>8a,c,d,<br>20d<br>22a,b<br>23a<br>24a,e                        |
| Learning                       | 7e,f<br>18,19,<br>20,22,<br>29c,d,e,j<br>32c,d,e | Learning                             | 5e,<br>8e,f,g,k,<br>14d,f,g<br>20c,<br>21,<br>22c,d,e,i,<br>23c,d,f       |
| Teaching                       | 21,23<br>24,25,<br>30,31                         | Teaching                             | 6,7,<br>9<br>14a,b,c,e<br>20a,b   |
| Links to home                  | 8,9,10,11,12,26,27                               | Links to home                        | 11,12,13  |
| Emotional                      | 7a,b,<br>13,14,15,16,17,<br>29 h,i,<br>32b,f,g   | Emotional                            | 5a,b,<br>8b,g,h,<br>10,15,16,<br>17,18,19,<br>22g,h,<br>23b,g,h,<br>24b,c |
| Musical                        | 7f,<br>29 f, g                                   | Musical                              | 5f<br>22f   |
| Parenting                      | 28   | Parenting                            | 8i,j,<br>23e  |
|                                |  | Organisational                       | 5h,<br>24d  |

Table 5.1 Theme categories and respective questionnaire question number for parent and practitioner groups (Appendix D and E)

The purpose of the practitioner questionnaire was to gain further insight into professionals' perceptions of benefits of the music group sessions and their beliefs about parents' attitudes to attending the music group activity also, to discover who leads musical activities in Children's Centres, and their attitudes towards music activities in Children's Centres.

The parent questionnaire sought to uncover detail about parents' perceptions and attitudes to attending music and the benefits for both them and their children. This necessitated differently nuanced designs of the two questionnaires and resulted in slightly different numbers of items in the various theme categories. A variety of question types were included in the questionnaire design to assist with triangulation and to gain some idea of the relative importance of some of the broad expressions found in the interview data. For example, by using similar items in both a ranking and rating scale question format it was possible to explore strength of feeling as well as what was most important to participants. Likert scale questions (1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree) included a mid-point '4' that might be considered a neutral position. Binary (yes/no) questions were used to allow for filtering of respondents to additional questions for those who answered 'yes'. Text boxes were included at the end of some questions to allow for the addition of extra items (these were not included in the analysis but are reported on separately).

### 5.2.2 Pilot testing of the questionnaire

The pilot testing of the questionnaires took place between 13<sup>th</sup> January -18<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and the main, amended version of it was launched online on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

The questionnaire closed on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012. Both questionnaires were pilot tested with ten participants. Participants spanned the age-ranges from early twenties to mid-sixties. Some adjustments were made to the wording of questions to include those parents who might bring more than one child to a session: for example response boxes for question 32 had been designed: Me, Both, Child. This was amended to: Me, All, Child 1, Child 2, Child 3 although the three child categories were amalgamated into 'child' for the analyses of the main study data because the additional child boxes were selected so rarely. One or two Likert scale items were slightly re-worded for clarity. The pilot study did not reveal any major difficulties with comprehension or use of the instruments.

A limitation of the pilot study was that it did not reveal the positive skew to the data that was found in the main study, although it is not clear how this could have been overcome since the purpose of the study was to generalise findings from the interview study to the wider population and interview participant data were used for the question items. An improvement to the pilot study might have been to test it with a wider group of parents and practitioners at one Children's Centre. The sample for the pilot was selected from personal contacts to achieve a span of ages and professional backgrounds but it was not random and this was another possible limitation.

### 5.2.3 Participant recruitment

#### **(I) Parents**

The sample of parents comprised 51 participants from the online version of the questionnaire and 40 participants who completed a paper version. Two online forums were used to reach parent participants; 'Netmums' and 'Mumsnet', both of which are accessible throughout the United Kingdom. Once the questionnaire was posted on these forums, it was not possible to control participation, apart from the preliminary filtering question that ensured that all participants were parents who took their children to music groups at their local Children's Centre. The paper version of the questionnaire was administered at a music group session at a Children's Centre, to ensure that those parents who may not choose to complete a questionnaire online could still participate.

However, by administering the questionnaire both online and in paper form it could be that the data that were collected were different in quality of response because of the person-to-person contact involved in the paper administration. The researcher helped three participants by re-phrasing or clarifying the question either because English was not the first language or because of literacy/understanding levels. As a result the response rate was far greater from the paper administration than online. It could be that not fully understanding a question accounted for some/all of the missing data from online participants.

To understand parents' reasons for participation in the questionnaire some attention is given below to the open-ended 'final comment' opportunity (Q.33) at the end of the questionnaire: some of these motivations may not have been for positive reasons.

- They may feel passionately about music:

'My family has always been a musical family, we love music and my son has done [music] from a young age...'

- It may be that they have a personal issue or reason for participating:

'I run my own music group so that is why I feel strongly and very positive about music sessions full stop'

Or: 'I am a nursery nurse in the adjoining Nursery and have attended a music course as part of my job. I strongly feel music helps from birth onwards.'

- Complaint/disappointment:

'The problem really is that the group used to be very small - about 8 children and their parents...now the music group has about 16-20 children per session. Totally different atmosphere, I'm a SAHP [Stay-at-Home Parent] for a reason - so my child avoids cortisol-inducing, stressful, false group situations like the music group has become. I am very disappointed in it.' (participation in the questionnaire may be to register a negative experience)

- They may enjoy attending the music groups unreservedly and this gives a strong positive bias:

'I think it is a brill and fab project for children and parents. Well done for all the wonderful time'



### **(I) Children's Centre settings and practitioners**

Children's Centres were invited to take part on the basis of location to ensure that rural, suburban and inner city areas were included - all Children's Centres in Norfolk and the London boroughs of Wandsworth and Tower Hamlets were invited to participate. Access to the multi-professional team members was negotiated via individual centre managers who acted as gatekeepers to their staff members' participation. Recruiting participants through the Children's Centre manager had its limitations as well as strengths. A limitation was that the researcher lost control over who was invited from the centre to participate. There may have been a number of reasons why a centre manager chose to forward the questionnaire link to his/her practitioners or not. It was requested that all staff members should be sent the link, but managers may have selected particular staff to either include or exclude, depending on their own views. Individual staff members could decide whether or not to participate. This voluntary informed consent may have been problematic. The e-mail containing the link to the questionnaire was sent by the staff member's boss so, depending on the relationship and the power relations at work in the individual centre, it could be speculated that the voluntary aspect may have been compromised in some cases. However, a strength of this recruitment approach was that there were no problems in accessing practitioners from a variety of professions and no need for managers to share personal practitioner information with the researcher. The amount of time that forwarding the link in an e-mail to all practitioners would take was minimal and therefore ensured a greater success rate.

In total 14 centres took part in the questionnaire study, with a total of 49 participants from a range of job roles. Beyond sending the questionnaire link there was no way of

identifying any participants, nor the centre to which they belonged through the questionnaire data. Musician participants were invited by centre managers and also the link to the questionnaire was posted on a closed Facebook group entitled 'early years music group' (members have to be invited to join the group and are generally music practitioners working in early years contexts). Members of the national MERYC-UK (Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children) group were also invited to participate and to forward the link to colleagues with relevant experience.

The open-ended 'final comment' opportunity (Q.33) at the end of the questionnaire revealed possible reasons for the practitioners' participation:

- Music group has a positive impacts on the families with whom they work:

'The music sessions really helped one of the families I was working with.... The music sessions lifted her (the mother's) spirits, made her feel more part of the local community and allowed her and her children to socialise with others in a fun, non-threatening, all-inclusive way, which helped all of them and improved her communication skills'

- Practitioners' professional/personal development:

'Music teacher (name..) has been training me to run the sessions. This has helped with my confidence and taught me new songs which I can continue to share with the families that attend the centre as well as my own family life.'

- Prior knowledge/understanding of the benefits of music in early childhood:

'Music improves the parent-child relationship and transcends language and other social barriers with its universal qualities.'

Perhaps preconceived ideas or personal experiences may influence the way individuals read and respond to the questions. What is clear is that those who chose to participate in this study have very positive responses to music groups in Children's Centres, and that their views of the benefits to all and the reasons for offering sessions are positive and unswerving.

#### 5.2.4 Methodological issues

What was unexpected was the extent to which both parents and practitioners considered music group activities to be a very positive experience. Scores on Likert scales were strongly skewed towards the positive end in spite of building good triangulation into the measurement tool with different types of questions on the same theme.

The questionnaire included several different types of questions: some asked for personal information such as age, occupation and gender. These questions may be classified according to Bryman (2012 p. 253) as *personal, factual questions*; some asked *factual questions about others* (ibid), such as age of child, gender of child, number of children and recollection of their baby's first reaction to music.

Participants were also asked factual questions about their opinions of the behaviour of others. For example, practitioners were asked to score on a Likert scale how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about parents' behaviour. *Questions about participants' attitudes* (Bryman, 2012, p.253) were also included. These questions

typically made use of Likert scales and were based upon statements that were generated by the data from the interview study - some of the interview participants' phrases were imported directly as questions in the questionnaire. Although an attempt was made to exclude any question that might be construed as leading the respondent to answer in a particular way, every statement could be seen as a leading question in this context. For example, asking participants to 'Strongly Disagree' or 'Strongly Agree' (on a seven point Likert scale) to the statement 'I sing more at home as a result of going to music group at the Children's Centre' (Q.8) may not seem to be leading respondents in any particular direction, but given that it is part of a PhD research project exploring the topic of music in Children's Centres it might be perceived by the participant that there is a 'right' or 'wrong' way to answer this question. Bryman (2008) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2010) both regard leading questions as those for which 'the question influences the answer' (Cohen 2010 p. 15), and it seems likely that attempts to avoid 'influencing the answer' can be more subtle than re-phrasing a question. The assumptions and beliefs of the researcher and the participant can influence the design of and responses to the question respectively.

## **5.3 Data Collection and Analysis**

### **5.3.1 Data collection**

The thematic categories generated by the interview study and investigated further in the questionnaire instruments are described in the next two sections. Firstly interview study quotations are used to provide some illustrative quotations in each category, and then I describe their rationale in more depth.

- **Social** - *“I think the socialisation is fantastic for her...just the participation of it.”* Parent 2
- **Emotional** - *“...It brightens everyone up...It’s a ‘feel good’ just being happy.”* Parent 3
- **Links to home** - *“...we probably do more at home, play the CD in the car, do the songs at home...”* Parent 1
- **Learning** - *“...so they’re modelling and copying at home what’s done in the group which will help develop their social interaction and attachment and things.”* Practitioner 1
- **Parenting** – *“...Giving their child time at home and tuning-in to them.”*  
Family Support Worker 1
- **Musical** – *“...You get an eye for someone who may go on to play an instrument.”* Musician 1
- **Teaching** - *“...I try to incorporate reflecting and responding to the children in my instrumental work....”* Musician 3
- **Organisational** - *“It’s a brilliant way of getting families in – they feel welcome and comfortable and can find out about other sessions.”* Musician 2

**Social** – Participants from the interview study mentioned the opportunity for children to mix together, integrate and socialise, which the music group afforded them. The chance for parents to make friends, and to get to know other parents, was also seen as a benefit of attending the music group sessions. The questionnaire instrument may provide some additional detail about this category. Do parents bring their children for their own benefit or for their children’s, in terms of socialisation? Further category items are related to the inclusiveness of music and its ability to integrate children and adults with a variety of needs and abilities.

**Emotional** – This theme includes items that relate to positive emotions such as happiness and confidence, as well as the negative emotions of apprehension and lack of confidence. It is hoped that the questionnaire may clarify some of the issues raised by the interview study in relation to feeling inhibited or embarrassed about participating in music as an adult. Who feels this most keenly – parents or practitioners? It is hoped that some different levels of strength of feeling may be identified between the groups.

**Links to home** – It was clear from the interview data that both practitioners and parents perceive that the music group sessions provide ideas that can be practised at home by parent participants. Aspects of teaching, modelling and parenting skills are explored in the questionnaire instrument to assess what difference, if any, parents attending with their children can make to music at home.

**Learning** – Some diversity in the structuring of the music sessions emerged as a result of the interview study. Models of music practice included a range of structured, planned, teacher-led formats as well as more improvisatory, child-led approaches. Many parents valued being led by an ‘expert’ for the duration of the session, observing their children and having some useful ideas modelled that they could use at home. Included in this category are items concerned with **Parenting** – practitioners spoke about the informal modelling of ideas and ways of interacting with children that took place through the music group activity.

**Musical** - Learning about music was seen by the interview participants as a valuable aspect of attending the group sessions as well as having benefits for all areas of children’s learning and development.

**Teaching** – explores the different techniques, materials, methods, approaches and frameworks that exist in the structure, planning and delivery of the music group sessions in the Children’s Centre. Certain aspects seem common to all, for example the inclusion of a greeting song at the start of the session and the use of simple instruments. The format of the sessions will be explored through the questionnaire.

**Organisational** –Some practitioners in the interview study talked about the demand from parents for music group sessions, and the difficulty in some instances in meeting that demand with their available resources, in terms of funding and/or having sufficient, suitable personnel. The music groups were considered by some as an excellent means of bringing families into the Children’s Centre and were therefore operationally important.

### 5.3.2 Data analysis

The data were considered to be ordinal as, apart from the background information about participants and their children, the questions explored attitudes and perceptions by means of participants’ subjective ratings of items, such that the differences between the numbers on a Likert scale could not be considered precisely the same in every case, nor could the number chosen equate exactly to a specific perception or attitude across all cases. Field (2009) points out that these data are sometimes regarded as continuous but really should not be (p.8). The data were also not normally distributed so that assumptions for using parametric techniques were not met (Pallant, 2007). The use of non-parametric techniques was the optimum choice for these data. Exploratory analyses between groups were carried out by means of Mann-Whitney *U* tests for pairwise comparisons and Kruskal-Wallis tests to

highlight any significant overall differences between three groups. Where a difference was found in the latter instance, Mann-Whitney *U* tests were carried out to reveal more precisely where the significance was located. When several post-hoc Mann-Whitney *U* tests were required – such as between the three age-groups of parents (between groups 1 and 2, groups 2 and 3, and groups 3 and 1), a Bonferroni adjustment was made to overcome the potential inflation of Type 1 errors. Rather than adopting a critical level of significance of 0.05 in these tests,  $0.05/3 = 0.0167$  was considered the critical value (Field, 2009, p. 566). Effect size in the Mann-Whitney *U* test is calculated by using the value of *z* that is reported in the output to derive an approximate value of *r* (Pallant, 2007, p.223)  $r = z / \text{square root of } N$ , where *N* = total number of cases. Cohen's (1998) criteria of 0.1 = small effect, 0.3 = medium effect, and 0.5 = large effect were used. Participants were grouped in the following ways for data analyses:

- Age group of parents (3 groups)
- Parent or Practitioner participants (2 groups)
- Job Title of Practitioner participants (3 groups)

Finally, missing data rates in the parent sample were around 80% (*n*=91) until the end of the questionnaire when interest began to wane - at worst to 54% of the sample for one item. The face-to-face administered paper copies had a slightly better response rate. The practitioner sample remained consistent at around 88% (*n* = 49) response rate: possible reasons for this might be that the respondents were participating in the sample as part of their work, and/or because their centre managers were responsible for forwarding the link to the questionnaire.



## **5.4 Results**

The first set of results provides descriptive information about the participants including age group and gender information. Statistically significant findings in relation to these data are detailed with respect to the exploration of the rationale for music in Children's Centre first, followed by results from main theme categories. The parent and practitioner group results are reported separately and then the significant results from the combined datasets for each theme. A brief discussion of the results and a summary conclude the chapter.

### **5.4.1 Information about participants**

#### **(I) Parents**

Approximately half the parent sample was aged between 27-35 years (n=47). This is in line with the Office of National Statistics census information (National-statistics, 2011) that found that nearly half (48 percent) of all babies born in 2010 were to mothers aged 30 years and over.

Ages were grouped in five categories: 16-21, 22-26, 27-35, 36-45 and 46+ years.

Due to low frequency counts in the upper and lower categories these were aggregated with the respective closest age group to give three final categories suitable for comparative analysis: Group 1 = 16-26, Group 2 = 27-35, and Group 3 = 36-46+ years.

Tables 5.2 shows the original five age groups and Table 5.3 the revised age groupings.

|             | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid 16-21 | 1         | 1.1     |
| 22-26       | 15        | 16.5    |
| 27-35       | 47        | 51.6    |
| 36-45       | 21        | 23.1    |
| 46+         | 7         | 7.7     |
| Total       | 91        | 100.0   |

|             | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid 16-26 | 16        | 17.6    |
| 27-35       | 47        | 51.6    |
| 36-46+      | 28        | 30.8    |
| Total       | 91        | 100.0   |

With respect to gender, 94.5 percent of the participants were female and 5.5 percent were male. This is not surprising given that the online forums are called ‘netmums’ and ‘Mumsnet’ respectively, likely therefore to be attracting female users, and the majority of the parents/carers at the music group sessions where the paper copies of the questionnaire were administered were also female.

## (II) Practitioners

Specific music group sessions are offered in many Children’s Centres, and some include musical activities as part of other family support sessions (e.g. Stay and Play, Messy Play). Apart from one ‘don’t know’ every participant replied that musical activities were included with parents in some form (Q.1) and 87.8% of this sample ( $n = 49$ ) were in settings where a specific music group is offered to families (Q2). It could be that only those centres who are ‘music-active/aware’ have selected to

participate in the questionnaire, and so it may not be representative of the population as a whole.

Three job title categories were allocated to the data: managers, Children's Centre practitioners and musicians. The Children's Centre practitioners group included individuals who gave job titles such as nursery teacher, crèche supervisor, family support worker, outreach worker, parent infant mental health worker, social worker, father's inclusion worker, receptionist/admin support, play and learning lead. Table 5.4 shows the frequency and percentages of participants within their job title.

|                                   | Frequency (n) | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| 1 Musician                        | 12            | 24.5%      |
| 2 Children's Centre practitioners | 25            | 51%        |
| 3 Manager                         | 12            | 24.5%      |
| Total                             | 49            | 100%       |

Table 5.4 Job titles and frequency of practitioner participants

Early years is one of the most gendered occupations with most countries achieving around only two percent male workforce<sup>1</sup>. The Children's Centre practitioners in this sample had five times the expected ratio of male-female participants (10.2%, n = 48, one musician and four Children's Centre practitioners). This is clearly a higher

<sup>1</sup> From <http://www.meninchildcare.eu/> accessed 2011

<sup>2</sup> accessed 15.4.13

(<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/Info.do?page=census2011onness/profile/n>)

percentage than expected from the overall nursery/early years practitioner workforce.

Multi-professional Children's Centre teams include a variety of professional disciplines: family support/fathers' workers, social workers, speech and language or music/play therapists whose workforce may have a different female-male ratio.

### (III) Children

There was an even distribution of male and female children (n= 54 female, n= 55 male).

#### *Age groups of children*

It appears from the results that musical experiences in a group setting are occurring for very young children through Children's Centres. Just over one third (33%) of all children from this sample are aged 0-1 years, with 83% of all children in the sample aged between 0-2 years (Q4). Table 5.5 shows the percentage distribution across the age-groups for 'Child 1' and 'Child 2'. Only 2 children appeared in 'Child 3' category, and are therefore shown as individual children in age groups.

| Age groups | Child 1 (n=90) | Child2 (n=19) | Child 3 (n=2) |
|------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 0-1 year   | 32% n=29       | 37% n=7       | n=1           |
| 1 year     | 27% n=24       | 5% n=1        |               |
| 2 years    | 26% n=23       | 37% n=7       |               |
| 3 years    | 11% n=10       | 16% n=3       |               |
| 4 years    | 4% n=4         | 5% n=1        | n=1           |

Table 5.5 Percentages and frequencies of children in each age group

Twenty percent of the parents brought more than one child to the music sessions and of those, only two percent brought three children. The number of children that an adult brought with them to music groups did not appear to influence significantly the way that participants scored the items, in that there were no statistically significant

results for any variable items when compared with number of children in a Kruskal-Wallis test.

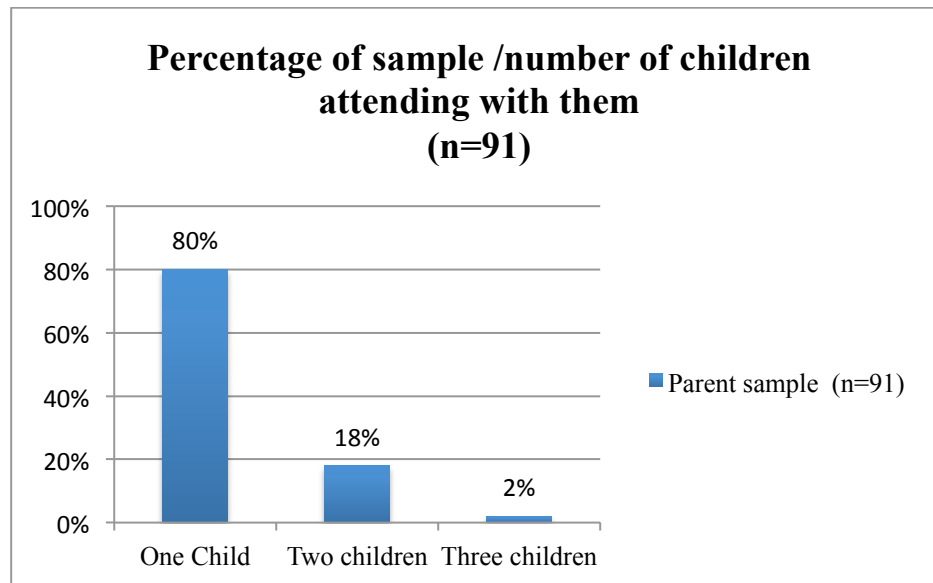


Figure 5.1 Percentages of participants attending with different numbers of children

Figure 5.1 shows that the majority of participants bring only one child to the music group sessions.

#### 5.4.2 Infants' first reactions to music

From the interview study five items emerged in relation to infants' first reactions to music. Parents remembered: Smile, Calming, Showing a Musical Preference, Laughter and Recognition. The questionnaire instrument sought to generalise these findings to a wider population of parents (Q.6). When asking parents to recollect their baby's first reaction to music it must be acknowledged that this may not be a completely accurate recollection. This factual question about another's behaviour relies on a possibly distorted view or reliance on memory recall from the respondent (Bryman 2012).

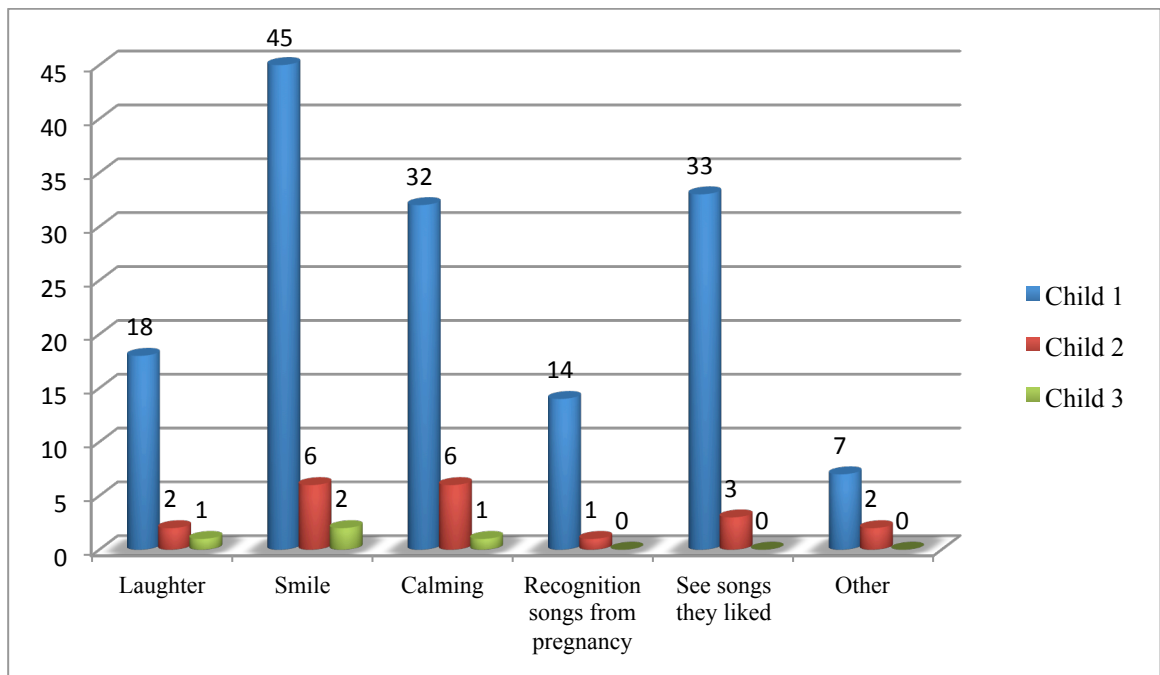


Figure 5.2 Frequency counts for infants' first reaction to music Child 1, Child 2, Child 3

Fig. 5.2 shows that responses for Child 1 were generally far more frequent than for Child 2 or 3. For example, Child 1 had a frequency count of 45 for 'Smile' indicating that parents recollected a reaction for 62.5% of the sample. For Child 2 the highest frequency count was 6 less than half (40%) of those given the title Child 2. This could be for a number of reasons. It is unclear which child, if they came with more than one, was nominated as Child 1 when answering this question. It could be their youngest child, in which case perhaps the memories would be fresher. It might be their older child (only 2% sample brought 3 children) in which case the recollections may be clearer as they had a single focus at the time of their infancy. In either case the child that had been nominated by the participant as Child 1 seemed to have the greater frequency of recollections of reaction to music associated with them.

There were additional comments from 5% of parent participants who wrote in the text-box 'other' category. Responses included:

“stopped screaming when I put my phone in his pram playing, 'Don't stop believing.'”

“Reaction from pregnancy was a playlist I listened to every day, twice a day from about five months pregnant. When she was days old I remember she was unsettled so I played the music and she just stopped and it was as if she was concentrating, wide awake, still and relaxed. Wish I kept it going.”

“Engagement and concentration” and “bouncing / dancing”

“He seemed very relaxed and fell asleep on a beanbag”.

#### 5.4.3 Age group of parents

Some differences were found between the age groups of parents and their responses to a variety of items in several theme categories. The items in Table 5.6 below show the significant differences found with variables with seven-point, Likert scale scores (1= Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). The number of participants in Group 1 (n=14) and Group 3 (n=12) is smaller in both cases than Group 2 (n=41).

| Item  | Kruskal-Wallis test result (all three age group variables)  | 'Post hoc' Mann-Whitney <i>U</i> test – statistically significant results (Bonferroni adjustment 0.05/3 = 0.0167)  |
|---|---|--|
| Q.8 – 'I sing more at home as a result of going to music group at the Children's Centre' ( <b>Links to home</b> )                         | $p < 0.054$<br>(n = 80)   | Group 1: 16-26 years, (n=14)<br>$\bar{x} = 4.5$ , M = 5<br><br>Group 2: 27-35 years, (n=41)<br>$\bar{x} = 5.73$ , M = 6  |
| Q.14 – I was a little nervous about attending the music group because of my feelings about my musical ability ( <b>Emotion-negative</b> ) | $p < 0.012$ ,<br>(n = 49)*  | Group 2: 27-35 years, (n =26),<br>$\bar{x} = 3.08$ , M = 2.50<br><br>Group 3: 36-46+years, (n = 12),<br>$\bar{x} = 5.17$ , M = 5.5   |
| Q.15 – I was a little nervous about attending the music group because I am nervous of groups. ( <b>Emotion – negative</b> )               | $p < 0.004$ ,<br>(n = 48)*<br><br>* the sample for Q 14 and Q15 comprises those respondents who answered Yes to Q13 | Group. 1: 16-26 years , (n = 10),<br>$\bar{x} = 4.7$ , M = 5<br><br>Group. 2: 27-35 years, (n = 27),<br>$\bar{x} = 3$ , M = 3<br><br>Group 2: 27-35 years, (n = 27),<br>$\bar{x} = 3$ , M = 3<br><br>Group 3 36-46+ years, (n = 11), $\bar{x} = 4.6$ , M = 4 |
| Q.23 – 'I like having familiar songs and rhymes in the session' ( <b>Teaching</b> )   | $p < 0.055$<br>(n = 78)   | Group. 1: 16-26 years, (n = 14).<br>$\bar{x} = 5.2$ , M = 5,<br><br>Group. 2: 27-35 years, (n = 41), $\bar{x} = 6$ , M = 6   |
| Q.25 – Using new songs stretches my child's/ren's development ( <b>Teaching</b> )   | $p < 0.015$ ,<br>(n = 77)   | Group. 1: 16-26 years, (n =14),<br>$\bar{x} = 4.6$ , M = 4.5<br><br>Group. 2: 27-35 years, (n =41),<br>$\bar{x} = 5.8$ , M = 6   |
| Q.28 – 'My parenting skills have improved because of what I've learned at the music group sessions' ( <b>Parenting</b> )                  | $p < 0.040$ ,<br>(n = 68)   | Group. 1: 16-26 years, (n = 13),<br>$\bar{x} = 3.2$ , M = 2<br><br>Group. 2: 27-35 years, (n = 36),<br>$\bar{x} = 4.8$ , M = 4   |
| Question 29, 'How beneficial are the following for your child?' 1 = not beneficial, 2= beneficial, 3 = very beneficial, 4 = don't know    |   |  |
| d. Their physical development (Learning)  | $p < 0.040$<br>(n=70).  | Group.1: 16-26 years, (n = 12), $\bar{x} = 2.2$ , M = 2<br><br>Group.2: 27-35 years, (n = 37), $\bar{x} = 2.7$ , M = 3   |
| i. They have the chance to express their feelings   | $p < 0.048$ , (n =64)   | Group.1: 16-26 years, (n =11), $\bar{x} =$   |



|                      |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| (Emotion - positive) |  | 2.3, M = 2<br><br>Group.2: 27-35 years, (n = 34), $\bar{x}$ = 2.8, M = 3 |
|----------------------|--|--|

Table 5.6 Likert Scales (1-7) and (1-3) items with statistically significant differences between age-group of parents

Apart from Q.15 where differences were found in more than one instance, and Q.14 where the difference was found between Group 2: 27-35 years and Group 3: 36-46+ years, all the significant differences were between Group 1: 16-26 years and Group 2: 27-35 years. Both the younger age-group: 16-25 years and the older age-group: 36-46+ years appear to agree more strongly with the negative emotion of items Q.14 and Q.15 than do the middle age-group 26-35 years.

Looking at the results in Table 6.6 it is apparent that **Group 1: 16-26 years** has a lower mean and median score than **Group 2: 27-35 years** on every item. This would suggest that the participants in the **Group 2** age group perceived that the music group is more beneficial in those items where a difference was found.

As discussed above, **Group 2 (27 – 35 years)** participants were also less nervous about attending the music group because they were less nervous of groups in general, and because they were less nervous about their musical ability than Group 1 and Group 3 participants.

#### 5.4.4 Why is music offered in Children's Centres?

##### Question seven - Parents

This question was designed to augment the findings from the interview study and asked participants to give a star rating to items relating to the reasons for attending music groups. Participants could select the same rating more than once: 1 = not important and 10 = very important. By selecting a 'tick all that apply' approach to

this question a discrimination between different items may be more difficult to achieve than in a forced-choice format (Bryman 2012). However, this question allowed for participants to respond freely and to gauge, to some extent, the strength of overall feeling about attending music groups. Subsequent questions were therefore designed to force choices, and thereby gain greater understanding of attitudes and perceptions between and within the theme categories.

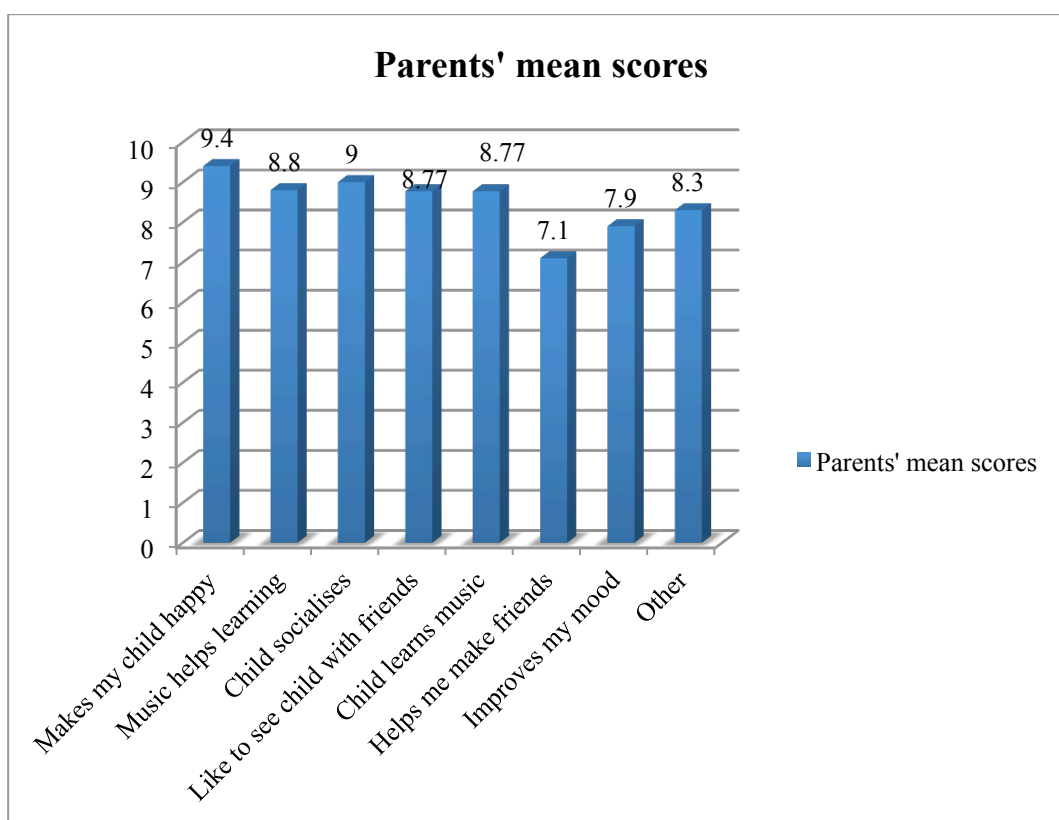


Figure 5.3 Parents' mean score results on question 7: Why is music offered in Children's Centres? (1=not important and 10=very important)

It was clear from the mean score results shown in Fig 5.3 above that parents responded very positively to every theme category item: the lowest  $\bar{x} = 7.1$ , giving some indication of the strength of positive response.

| <b>Table 5.7 Parents' responses Why is music offered in Children's Centres?</b> |         |                                   |                                  |                               |                                       |                                      |                                    |  |             |
|---|---------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|-------------|
|   |         | makes<br>child<br>happy<br>rating | improves<br>my<br>mood<br>rating | child<br>socialises<br>rating | helps me<br>make<br>friends<br>rating | music<br>helps<br>learning<br>rating | child<br>learns<br>music<br>rating | like see<br>child<br>with<br>friends<br>rating | other       |
| N   | Valid   | 82                                | 81                               | 82                            | 81                                    | 82                                   | 82                                 | 80   | 14          |
|   | Missing | 22                                | 23                               | 22                            | 23                                    | 22                                   | 22                                 | 24   | 90          |
| Mean  |         | 9.37                              | 7.91                             | 9.00                          | 7.11                                  | 8.83                                 | 8.77                               | 8.78   | 8.29        |
| Std. Error<br>of Mean   |         | .126                              | .229                             | .156                          | .294                                  | .175                                 | .186                               | .199   | .801        |
| Median  |         | 10                                | 8                                | 10                            | 8                                     | 9.5                                  | 10                                 | 10   | 10          |
| Mode  |         | 10                                | 10                               | 10                            | 10                                    | 10                                   | 10                                 | 10   | 10          |
| <b>Std.<br/>Deviation</b>   |         | <b>1.139</b>                      | <b>2.06</b>                      | <b>1.42</b>                   | <b>2.650</b>                          | <b>1.59</b>                          | <b>1.687</b>                       | <b>1.779</b>                                   | <b>2.99</b> |
| Variance  |         | 1.297                             | 4.23                             | 2.00                          | 7.025                                 | 2.51                                 | 2.847                              | 3.164  | 8.99        |
| Skewness  |         | -1.74                             | -.747                            | -1.584                        | -.870                                 | -1.560                               | -1.44                              | -1.70  | -1.98       |
| Range   |         | 5                                 | 8                                | 6                             | 9                                     | 7                                    | 7                                  | 8  | 9           |
| Minimum   |         | 5                                 | 2                                | 4                             | 1                                     | 3                                    | 3                                  | 2  | 1           |
| Maximum   |         | 10                                | 10                               | 10                            | 10                                    | 10                                   | 10                                 | 10   | 10          |

Table 5.7 shows that the standard deviation for each variable remained close to the mean, so it can be assumed that the scores are representative of the population. The exceptions - items 7d. 'helps me make friends' (**Social**) SD=2.650, and 7b. 'improves my mood' (**Emotion**) SD=2.06 - may indicate these are less representative of the population.

A ranking of these mean scores shows that the top three reasons for parents in attending music groups at the Children's Centre are:

7a. 'going to music group makes my children happy' (**Emotion**)  $\bar{x} = 9.4$  (n=82);

7c. 'music group is a chance for my children to socialise in a group (**Social**).  $\bar{x} = 9$  (n = 82);

7e. 'music group helps children's overall learning' (**Learning**)  $\bar{x}$  = 8.8, M = 9.5, (n = 82).

The observing-role opportunity that the group affords is valued by the majority of parents as over half of the sample (53%, n = 42) selected 10 = very important for item 7g. 'I like to see her/him having fun with her/his friends' (**Social**)  $\bar{x}$  = 8.8 M=10, as a reason for attending the music groups.

It does seem from these results however that the perceived benefits for their children of attending music group are more important to parents than any perceived benefits for themselves: 'going to music group improves my mood'  $\bar{x}$  = 7.9 (n = 81) 'helps me make friends'  $\bar{x}$  = 7.1 (n = 81) are the lowest positioned items in the rating scale. Parents may not prioritise their own needs when considering the reasons for attending the music group, preferring to focus on the benefits to their children - and/or the beneficial aspects for themselves may not be as positively felt.

There were also differences in ratings on 'Going to music group improves my mood' (**Emotion-positive**), item 7b. between different age groups of parents - a significant difference was found between two of the age groups of parents (16-26 years, 27-35 years) :  $X^2 = 8.093$ ,  $p < 0.02$  n = 81 This is shown in the mean and median scores of the two groups: **Gp. 1: 16-26 yrs.**, (n = 15),  $\bar{x}$  = 6.7, M = 7, **Gp. 2: 27-35 yrs.**, (n = 42),  $\bar{x}$  = 8.5, M = 9.

An 'Other' text box item was optional and responses included items such as:

“I love to see him joining in with actions to familiar songs”

“Hard to answer these! When we first started going to music group we both loved it, made loads of new friends and had a nice time. Now we dislike it. My son is always unhappy and gets distressed...”

“Music is an important part of our family life so would like my son to take an interest in music”

“Speech development”

“Imagination building”

“Attending music has improved my daughter’s confidence immensely”

#### Question five - Practitioners

This question was identical to that in the parent questionnaire with the addition of one item in the variable list for the practitioner version. Through interviewing practitioner members the issue of demand from parents for music group activities emerged as a reason for offering them in centres, and so this was included as an item in the practitioner questionnaire. Fig 5.4 (below) shows that item - 5h. ‘Demand from parents. ‘They want more groups’ proved the least popular with practitioner participants:  $\bar{x} = 7.6$  (n = 49).

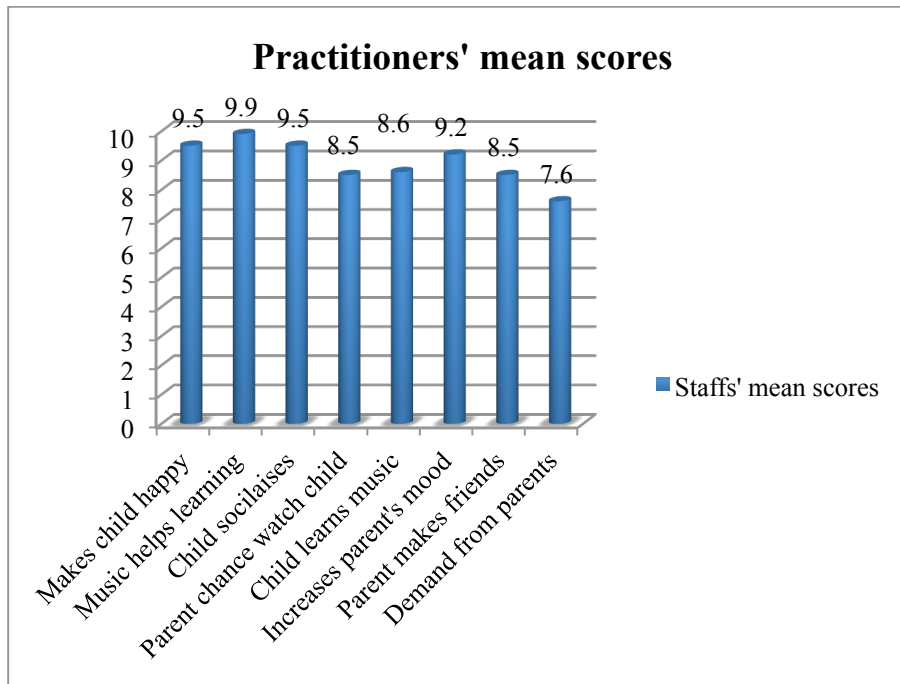


Figure 5.4 Practitioners' mean score results on Question 5: Why is music included in Children's Centres? (1=not important and 10=very important)

The top three reasons given by the practitioner sample were identical to the parent choices, as shown in Fig 5.4 above, but were ranked differently. First was item 5e. 'music helps children's other learning outcomes' (**Learning**)  $\bar{x}$  = 9.86, (n = 49); second was item 5c. 'benefits to children's social development' (**Social**)  $\bar{x}$  = 9.53, (n=49); and third was item 5a. 'increases good feelings for the children' (**Emotion-positive**)  $\bar{x}$  = 9.51, (n=49).

Figure 5.5 below shows the top three items (out of 8) of the mean scores of parents and practitioners (rating scale: 1= 'not important', 10 = 'very important')

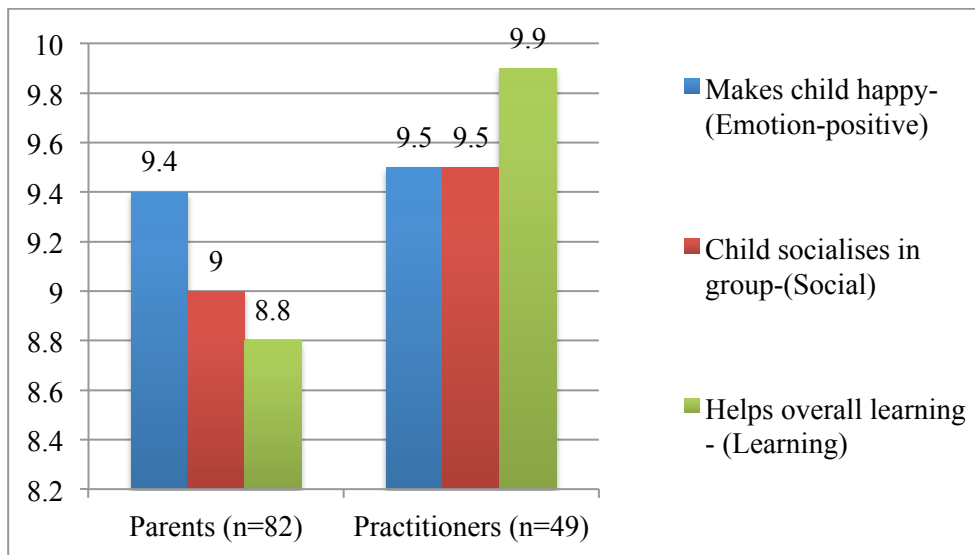


Figure 5.5 Mean scores top three items for Parents (Q7) Practitioners (Q5)

Although members of the parent sample were positive in their response to this question, the results from the practitioner sample indicated that they were more positive in their responses to the **Social** and **Learning** items as the mean and median scores demonstrate below:

‘benefits to children’s social development’ (**Social**) Practitioners (n=49)  $\bar{x}$  = 9.53, M = 10, Parents (n= 82)  $\bar{x}$  = 9.0, M = 10;

‘music helps learning’ (**Learning**): Parents (M = 9.50, n = 82) Practitioners (M = 10.00, n = 49).

Furthermore, results from the practitioner sample concerning the benefits for parents in attending music group showed some differences as compared with the parent sample:

‘increasing good feelings for the parent’ (**Emotion-positive**), Parents (M = 8, n = 81) and Practitioners (M = 10, n = 49);

‘helping parents to make friends’ (**Social**), Parents (M = 8, n = 81) Practitioners (M = 9, n = 49).

#### 5.4.5 Principal findings about why music is offered in Children’s Centres

There is a subtle difference between the two groups in their views about the underlying rationale for music in Children’s Centres. It would seem that parental desire is for their children to participate in an activity that they enjoy, and that allows for them to mix with other children: the learning benefits are positive but slightly less important. Practitioners, on the other hand, seem to want to offer an activity that is primarily beneficial to a child’s overall learning and development and which also provides opportunities for socialisation in an enjoyable and conducive atmosphere.

It was unexpected that the responses from all participants would be so positive, and this suggests that the statistical evidence reported above is tempered by the overall positive skew from both groups of participants. It is unclear exactly why participants responded so positively to the question items. Further questions in the questionnaire tool included detailed, forced-choice questions within the theme categories that helped, in some respects, to throw more light upon this unexpected finding.

#### 5.4.6 Results of theme categories

This section will report results from analysis of material that relates to the theme categories generated by the interview study, which are incorporated into the questionnaire in various questions types (as shown in Table 5.1). The results are reported from the two questionnaires separately and then from the combined dataset



results. Each theme title represents a broad category with different aspects for exploration. Attitudes to these different aspects are investigated throughout the questionnaire and provide further illumination on the findings of the previous interview study.

## **(I) Social category**

### Parent Questionnaire Results

The first theme category to be reported is **Social** which includes two main aspects: social benefits to children and social benefits to parent.

In the first question about attitudes (Q7) there are three social category items:

- c. Music group is a chance for my children to socialise in a group
- d. Music group helps me make friends
- g. I like to see her/him having fun with her/his friends

Item c. is concerned with benefits to children and the results show that 54% of the sample scored this item: 10 (very important) ( $n = 82$ ), 18% scored 9/10, and 16% scored 8/10. Therefore, 88% of the sample of parents scored this item between 8-10 on the ten-point scale:  $\bar{x} = 9.00$ , SD 1.41.

Item d. is concerned with benefits to parent/carer 'Music group helps me make friends'. The scores on this item were more widely distributed than on item c. with just over half (56%) the parent sample scoring in the 8-10 range of the ten-point scale (10 = very important), yet with lower overall mean and median scores:  $\bar{x} = 7.11$  SD 2.65.

Item g. seeks to measure parental attitudes to their observation role of their children's socialising in a group. In this sample (n = 80) over half (53%) scored 10 (very important)  $\bar{x} = 8.78$ , SD = 1.78.

In spite of the fact that this question allowed participants to mark different items with the same score there is still evidence of strength of feeling within the responses. It seems to be that parents' attitudes to attending music groups are most strongly centred towards the benefits to their children – item c.

Aspects of the social category were explored still further in question 29, on which participants selected from: 1= not beneficial, 2 = beneficial, 3= very beneficial, 4= don't know, for a variety of items. The purpose of this question was to discover how strongly participants feel about items being beneficial for their children. The choices in the **Social** category are: 'the children's socialisation with their peers' (item 29a.) and 'our interaction together' (item 29b)

| Item  | Very beneficial | Beneficial | Not beneficial | Don't know |
|---|-----------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| <b>Q.29a. Their socialisation with peers (n=73)</b> | 75%             | 19%        | 1.5%           | 4%         |
| <b>Q.29b. Our Interaction together (n=71)</b>       | 72%             | 28%        | -              | -          |

Table 5.8 Question 29 Social aspects

Table 5.8 shows that item b. produced more consistency in responses and item a. revealed a slightly higher percentage score of ‘Very beneficial’, although there were a few responses in ‘Don’t know’ and ‘Not beneficial’, demonstrating less consistently positive response to this item when compared with item b. This might suggest that overall parents are slightly more positive about the benefit of interaction together than they are that the children socialise with peers.

#### *Who benefits most from attending the music group? – Social - Parents*

Question 32 explored the question: ‘who benefitted most from attendance at music groups across a range of items the parents or the children?’ It was decided to include an ‘all’ option, which meant that the benefits of a binary question-type were lost, but that attitudes could be represented more accurately. Participants were invited to select one of 1 = Me, 2 = All, or 3 = Children. The results showed that ‘Time for one-to-one interaction All = 96%, Children = 3%, Me = 2%, (n = 68), and this is shown in Fig 5.6 below.

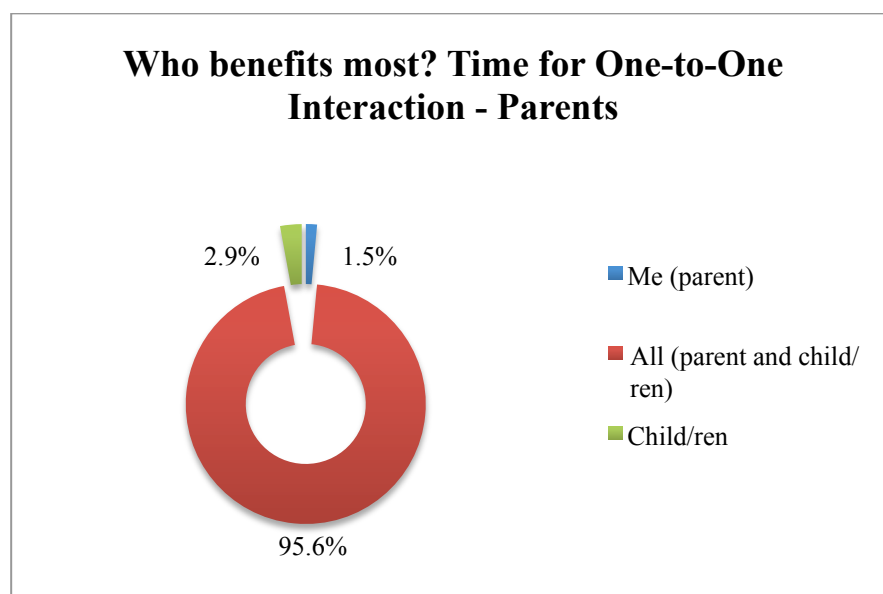


Figure 5.6 Who benefits most from one-to-one interaction – Parents

Considering these results together it appears that this sample of parents' attitudes to the **social** category are very positively scored in items concerned with socialisation opportunities for their children with peers. The interaction between parent and child is seen as beneficial to both parents and children. Slightly less positively scored are those items relating to parents' own involvement in the sessions. The potential to make friends from the music group and to observe their children are scored less positively. Overall the results have to be seen as representative of subtle differences within a very positive, rather narrow spectrum.

Parents in the sample can clearly tell that the one-to-one interaction time is valuable for their children as well as themselves. The music group session allows privacy and intimacy between parent and child and gives permission for this one-to-one interaction that other times in the day may not allow. The undivided positive attention that parents give their children in these intimate moments in the music session can contribute to secure emotional attachment and bonding. This is especially valuable in Children's Centre sessions in which these sessions are free, so that parents who might not otherwise choose to pay for a music group can and do attend at the Children's Centre. This was a strand of the social theme category that had been identified by the practitioner sample in the interview study.

#### Practitioner Questionnaire Results

Associations were found between social category items 5c, 5d, 20d, and 24a, and job roles of practitioners. All were designed with the same rating scale: 1= not important

to 10=very important. A significant difference was found in item 20d. ‘Inclusive activity’:  $\chi^2=8.946$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $\bar{x} = 9.74$ ,  $M=10$  ( $n = 43$ ).

Children’s Centre practitioner and Musician groups appear to value the inclusive nature of music activities more highly - both groups had median scores of 10,- than do the Manager group with a median score of 9.5.

Further clarification within the social category items was possible when practitioners were asked to rank items from most important (1<sup>st</sup>) to least important (11<sup>th</sup>) (Q8). The results are shown in Fig 5.7 below

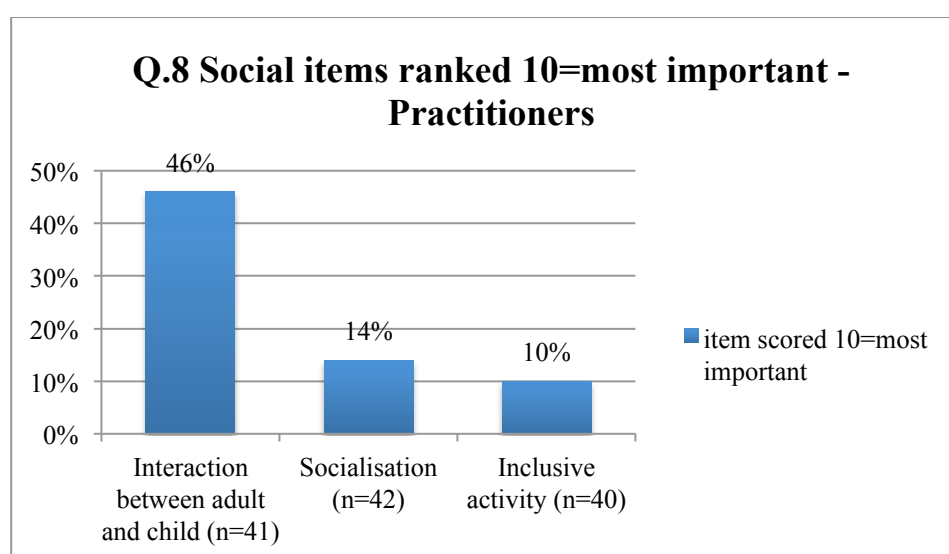


Figure 5.7 Practitioners’ ranking of Social items on Question 8

Almost half the practitioner participants selected ‘Interaction between adult and child’ as the most important **Social** aspect, with ‘socialisation’ and ‘inclusive activity’ considered less important. In addition, triangulation of these results was achieved by asking participants to rate how beneficial these aspects are for the

children (Q.22) where 1= not beneficial, 2 = beneficial, 3 = very beneficial and 4 = don't know.

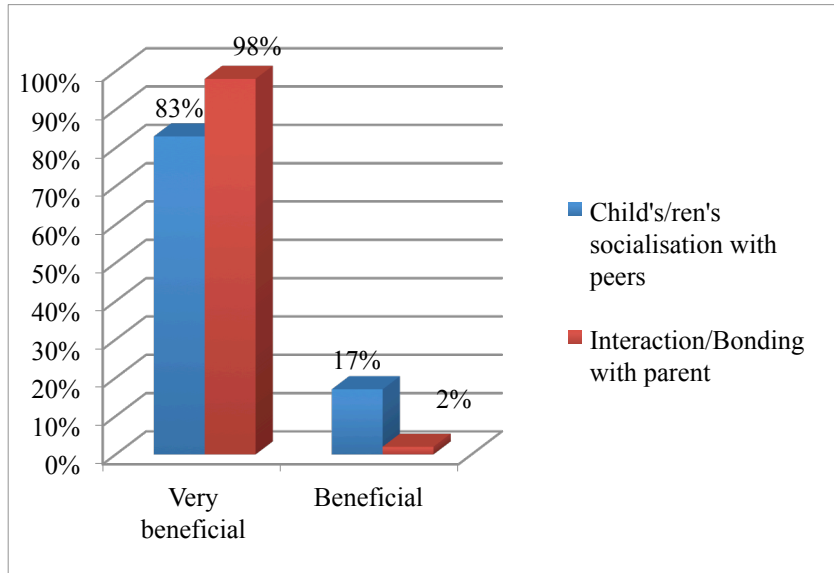


Figure 5.8 Percentage responses - Practitioners on Question 22 - Social items

Fig 5.8 shows that although both items were scored very positively, 'Interaction/Bonding with parent' was valued more highly by the practitioner sample than was children socialising with peers.

Further investigation revealed a difference between the parent and practitioners'

mean and median scores: Item 29b.(parents), 22b. (practitioners)

**interaction/bonding together** : Parents (n=71),  $\bar{x}$  = 2.7, M=3, Practitioners (n = 42),  $\bar{x}$  = 2.98, M = 3.

It would therefore seem that the practitioner group considered interaction and bonding between adult and child as being more important than did the parent group.

*Who benefits most from attending the music group? – Social – Practitioners*

The final question (Q.29) attempted to assess the perceived level of benefit within the aspects of the social theme category. Participants were asked to select from:

Parent = 1, Both = 2, Child = 3. The results are shown in Fig 5.9 below

Q.29a. Time for one-to-one interaction, (n = 43), Parent = 5%, Both = 95%

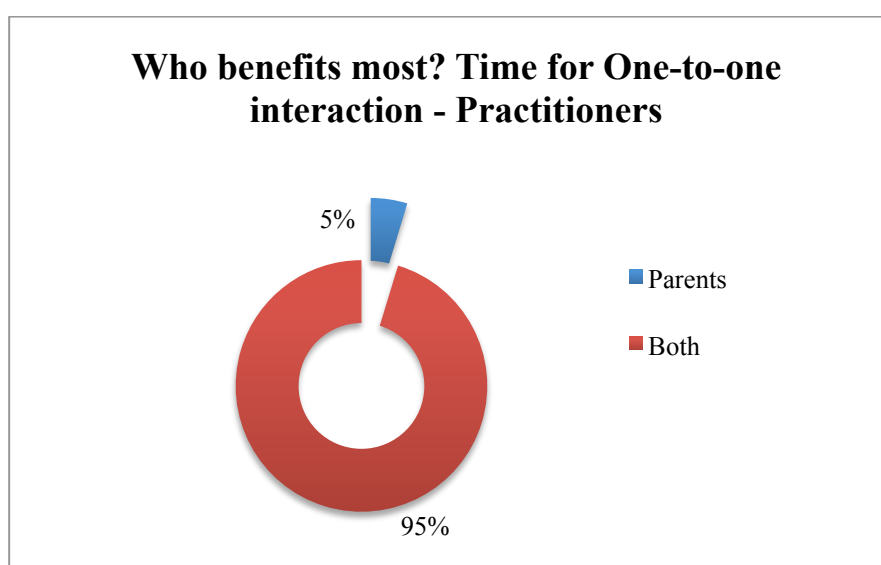


Figure 5.9 Who benefits most from one-to-one interaction – Practitioner responses

Both the parents and practitioner samples mostly selected the 'Both' category in answer to this item, although there were small differences between the two groups: 5% practitioners selected 'parents benefit'. Parents selected themselves as benefitting more in only 2% of cases as compared to the practitioners' 5% in this item: 3% of parents perceived that their children benefitted most from the one-to-one interaction time, and no practitioner felt that children benefit most.

When practitioner participants were forced to choose, as in questions 8 and 22, it became clear that the 'interaction' item was more often chosen as 'most important', whereas in the 'select the same rating more than once' question (Qs 5, 20 and 24),

the ‘interaction’ item did not stand out as prominently. This highlights the weakness of the ‘select the same rating more than once’ question format in this particular measurement instrument. The strength of using different types of questions allowed the theme category to be explored from different perspectives and a greater understanding about practitioners’ attitudes was gained as a result.

## **(II) Emotion category**

The Emotion category comprises opposing aspects: **Emotion-Positive**, emotions associated with good feelings and confidence, and **Emotion-Negative**, those emotions associated with anxiety, apprehension and lack of confidence.

Questions were designed to attempt to unravel some of the issues that emerged during the interview study concerning practitioner and parent perceptions and attitudes towards the parent–role during the music group sessions, as well as any potential barriers to their participation. The issue of confidence required of practitioners in order to lead musical elements as part of their job-role also emerged through the interview study.

### **Parent Questionnaire Results**

Some **Emotion** items of significance have already been reported in an earlier section (5.4.3) of this chapter in relation to age group of parents. Differences were found between different age groups of parents in their feelings of nervousness about attending music group either because they were nervous of groups or nervous about their musical ability.



The area of emotion is a complex and difficult one to measure accurately. Participants may have highly varied internal rating scales for feelings of anxiety and apprehension, confidence and happiness and the external signs of these emotion states may be hard to assess from the outside. The data collected is viewed as ordinal because it would be problematic to consider Likert scale choices as scale data in matters of emotion. This thesis is exploratory in design and does not use a previously tested psychological instrument to assess emotional well-being: the data should therefore be seen as representing attitudes and perceptions in the same way as the other theme category data.

#### *Emotion-Positive Parents*

The emotion aspects covered in Q.7 are (**Emotion-Positive**):

- 7a.     Going to music group makes my child happy
- 7b.     Going to music group improves my mood

Around 64% scored item 7a. as 10 = very important (1= not important, 10 = very important) as a reason for attending the session ( $\bar{x} = 9.37$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ,  $n = 82$ ). Data for item 7b. were more normally distributed across the range of scores than other items, ( $\bar{x} = 7.91$ ,  $SD = 2.06$ ,  $n = 81$ ) confirming, as did the results in the **Social** category, that the primary motivation for parents in this sample appears to be benefits for their children and less so for themselves.

| Parent item                         | N         | Minimum* | Maximum*  | Mean        | SD          |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>7a. makes child happy rating</b> | <b>82</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>9.37</b> | <b>1.14</b> |
| 7b. improves my mood                | 81        | 2        | 10        | 7.91        | 2.06        |
| 10. improves child's mood           | 81        | 2        | 7         | 5.91        | 1.16        |
| <b>29h. child loves music group</b> | <b>70</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>3</b>  | <b>2.77</b> | <b>0.46</b> |
| 29i. expresses feelings             | 64        | 1        | 3         | 2.58        | 0.61        |

*\*Please note that the table shows diverse question types:*

*7a., 7b., 1=not important, 10=very important, 10, 1=Strongly Disagree- 7=Strongly Agree,*

*29h., 29i., 1= Not beneficial, 2 = Beneficial, 3 = Very beneficial, 4 = Don't know*

Table 5.9 Mean and Median results **Emotion-positive** items

The mean scores of **Emotion-positive** variables (Table 5.9) appear to show that what is most important to parents is their children's enjoyment of the music group. This can be seen in the following specific responses:

7a. 'makes my child happy', (n = 82)  $\bar{x}$  = 9.37, minimum 5, maximum 10, SD = 1.14

29h. 'my child loves music group', (n = 70)  $\bar{x}$  = 2.77, minimum 1, maximum 3, SD = 0.46

Those items that describe improvement to mood or confidence (7b., 10, 29i.) appear to be less important.

### *Emotion-Negative Parents*

One issue that was generated by the interview study (Phase 1) concerned parents' embarrassment or anxiety about attending a music group, and it was unclear whether this was anxiety about groups, or musical ability. The questionnaire items were designed to explore this issue in more detail. Question 13 asked parents if they were

nervous about attending the music group, with a Yes/No option. Table 5.10 below shows the results for Q.13. More than half the sample (62.8%) answered that they were not nervous about attending the music group, and just over 30% agreed that they were nervous.

| Were you nervous about attending the music group? Q.13 | Frequency | Age-group  | Percent      | Valid percent |
|--|-----------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| Yes  | 29        | 16-21= 1   | 31.9         | 37.2          |
|  |           | 22-26 = 6  |              |               |
|  |           | 27-35 =12  |              |               |
|  |           | 36-45 = 7  |              |               |
|  |           | 46+ = 3    |              |               |
| <b>No</b>  | 49        | 16-21 = 0  | <b>53.8</b>  | <b>62.8</b>   |
|  |           | 22-26 = 6  |              |               |
|  |           | 27-35 = 29 |              |               |
|  |           | 36-45 = 11 |              |               |
|  |           | 46+ = 3    |              |               |
|  |           |            | 85.7 (Total) |               |
| Missing  | 13        |            | 14.3         | 100.0         |
| Total  | 91        |            | 100.0        |               |

Table 5.10 Table showing distribution of age groups of parents and responses to Q.13

The questionnaire instruments had been designed with the assistance of an online questionnaire tool (KwikSurvey) and one of its helpful options was the opportunity to filter respondents depending on the way they answered the previous question.

Those who chose the ‘Yes’ option in Q.13 were filtered to two Likert scale questions: Q.14: ‘I was a little nervous about attending the music group because of my feelings about my musical ability,’ and Q.15: ‘I was a little nervous about attending the music group because I am nervous of groups’ before encountering Q.16. Those answering ‘No’ were directed immediately to Q.16.

However, when administering paper copy versions of the questionnaire to other participants, all the questions were visible to every participant irrespective of their

responses. This became a problem with Questions 13, 14 and 15. Once the data were collected it became clear that some of the 'No' respondents had answered the filtered questions. This presented a dilemma: should the 'No' response data be included in the analysis, or not? A pragmatic view was eventually taken to use all the data as the results would help triangulate the results about parental anxiety by comparing the mean scores of the two groups. A Mann-Whitney *U* test revealed that there was a significant difference between the Yes group and those participants in the 'No' group that had answered Q.14 and Q.15, as the following comparisons of mean and median scores of the two groups demonstrates:

**Q.14 nervous - musical ability:**

Yes (n = 28)  $\bar{x}$  = 4.32, M = 5,

No (n= 18)  $\bar{x}$  = 2.94, M = 2.5.

**and in Q15 nervous - groups:**

Yes (n=28)  $\bar{x}$  = 4.43, M = 4,

No (n=18)  $\bar{x}$  = 2.72, M = 2.

These results were to be expected, and confirmed that participants were congruent in their expressions of their emotions across the three questions. This helped to support the internal validity of the measurement instrument. These results indicate that there is a slightly stronger effect size for those in the sample who are nervous of attending the music groups and their feelings of nervousness about groups than for those who are not nervous. Social anxiety may be marginally more problematic to parents in this sample than anxiety about music when attending the group sessions.

The results for the series of questions Q.14-17 relating to **Emotion-negative**

(1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree) are detailed below in Table 5.11

|        | Nervous because musical ability (Q14) | Nervous of groups (Q15) | Increase confidence in musical ability (Q16) | Anxiety about musical ability decreased (Q17) |
|--------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Mean   | 5.31                                  | 5.29                    | 6.02   | 6.00  |
| Median | 6                                     | 6                       | 6  | 6   |
| SD     | 2.88                                  | 2.53                    | 2.42   | 2.35  |
| N      | 50                                    | 48                      | 78   | 78  |

Table 5.11 Results of parent sample to questions relating to Emotion-negative items

Parents in this sample seem to experience a slight increase in both these aspects as a result of attending the music sessions as shown in the results to Q.16 and Q.17 where the mean scores overall show a slight increase.

Using the Yes/No groups from Question 13, pairwise comparison Mann-Whitney *U* tests were conducted with all further items that related to emotion; 7a. and b., 10, 29 h. and i. The only significant difference was found in item 7b., as the comparisons of the mean and median scores of the two groups demonstrates below:

**7b. ‘going to music group improves my mood’:**

Yes (n = 29),  $\bar{x}$  = 7.21, M = 8,

No (n = 48)  $\bar{x}$  = 8.31, M = 9.

This seems to indicate that there is an association between participants feeling a greater mood improvement from going to the music group and not being nervous about attending the sessions.

*Who benefits most from attending the music group? Emotion – Parents*

When the parent sample were asked whom they felt benefits most from the music group sessions (Q.32), given the choices of: Me =1, All = 2, Child = 3 they indicated that the sessions benefitted both parent and child - the ‘All’ option was mostly selected in preference to the others as is shown below in Table 5.12.

| Question 32 – <b>Emotion</b> items                      | Me =<br>1 | <b>All</b> =<br><b>2</b> | Child =<br>3 |
|---|-----------|--------------------------|--------------|
| 32g. ‘lifts mood’ (n = 66) (missing n = 25)             | 4%        | <b>90%</b>               | 6%           |
| 32b. ‘Close physical contact’ (n = 67) (missing n = 24) | 3%        | <b>90%</b>               | 7%           |
| 32f. ‘Confidence building’ (n = 68), (missing n = 23).  | 4%        | <b>80%</b>               | 16%          |

Table 5.12 Parent sample: Who benefits most? **Emotion** results

The 10% change in the ‘All’ score in the ‘Confidence building’ item is perhaps an indication that participants were giving consideration to each item individually and not simply selecting ‘All’ every time.

**Practitioner Questionnaire Results**

The table below displays the mean scores and standard deviations of the **Emotion-positive** items. In the majority the SD is less than 1.00 which indicates that the responses represent the sample fairly accurately.

### *Emotion-Positive Practitioners*

Overall the practitioners' scores are more positive than those of the parents although as stated elsewhere in this chapter the overall results are broadly very positive so that any differences are located within a fairly narrow range. Practitioner results indicated that increasing good feelings and providing an expressive/creative opportunity for children are considered highly important, as can be seen in Table 5.13 below:

Table 5.13 Practitioners' mean score results: **Emotion-positive** items

| Practitioner <b>Emotion-positive</b> item       | N         | Minimum*  | Maximum*                | Mean        | SD          |
|---|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>5a. increases good feelings for children</b> | <b>49</b> | <b>6</b>  | <b>10</b>               | <b>9.51</b> | <b>0.96</b> |
| 5b. increases good feelings for parent          | 49        | <b>3</b>  | <b>10</b>               | 9.18        | 1.44        |
| 8b. Rank good feelings (rank first to last)     | 41        | <b>11</b> | <b>1</b>                | 3.68        | 2.24        |
| 22g. children love music group                  | 41        | <b>2</b>  | <b>4 (4=don't know)</b> | 2.85        | 0.48        |
| 22h. express feelings                           | 42        | <b>2</b>  | <b>3</b>                | 2.86        | 0.35        |
| 24b.Lifts mood                                  | 43        | <b>7</b>  | <b>10</b>               | 9.42        | 0.98        |
| <b>24c.Expressive/creative opportunity</b>      | <b>43</b> | <b>8</b>  | <b>10</b>               | <b>9.65</b> | 0.69        |

\* This table shows different question types using a selection of scale systems:

5a., 5b.,24b., 24c. 1=not important – 10=very important, Rating scale

8b. Ranking scale 1=most important

22g., 22h., 1=Not beneficial, 2= Beneficial, 3=Very beneficial, 4= Don't know

When practitioners were asked to rank items with their most important first and least important item last (Q.8), the results revealed that 'Good feelings' (8b.) (**Emotion-positive**) was placed in third position and 'Overcoming musical anxiety' (8h.) (**Emotion-negative**) was placed in ninth position (the list comprised eleven items), giving an indication of the relative strength of feeling about the two aspects: 'Overcoming musical anxiety' perhaps not as important an issue for practitioners as

the good feelings they perceive that parents and children derive from musical activity.

*Who benefits most from attending the music group? Emotion – Practitioners*

Practitioners were asked whom they felt benefits most from attending the music group sessions (Q.23), given the choices of: Parent =1, Both = 2, Child = 3. The results are shown below alongside the parent scores for the same **Emotion category** items.

As can be seen in Table 5.14 below, results reveal that the practitioner sample believed that musical activities benefit both parent and child more strongly than do the parent sample. The item of ‘confidence building’ shows a divergence in views between parents and practitioners. 93% of practitioners believed that both parents and children gained confidence through the activity, and parents less so: 16% of parents perceived that the child solely benefits, 4% that they benefit and 80% that they both benefit.



|                      |  |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
|                      | 23b. Close physical<br>Parent (n=67)<br>Practitioners (n = 43) | 23g. Confidence<br>Parent (n=68)<br>Practitioners (n = 42) | 23h. Lifts mood<br>Parent (n =66)<br>Practitioners (n= 43) |
| Parent               | Me = 3%  | Me = 4%  | Me = 4%  |
|                      | All = 90%  | All = 80%  | All = 90%  |
|                      | Child = 7%   | Child = 16%  | Child = 6%   |
| <b>Practitioners</b> | <b>Parent = 5%</b>   | <b>Parent = 7%</b>   | <b>Parent = 7%</b>   |
|                      | <b>Both = 91%</b>  | <b>Both = 93%</b>  | <b>Both = 90%</b>  |
|                      | <b>Child = 5%</b>  | <b>Child = 0%</b>  | <b>Child = 3%</b>  |

Table 5.14 Who benefits most from attending the music group? Parents' and practitioners' results

#### *Leading musical activities - Practitioners*

Associations within the emotion category were explored between those who lead musical activities and those who do not (Q.6). No associations were found between these groups with those items relating to musical anxiety/confidence of parents (Q.15,16,17,18,19). An association was found between the groups when asked about inhibitions connected with leading musical activities (Q.10: 'I feel inhibited about leading musical activities', 1 = Strongly Disagree – 7 = Strongly Disagree),  $X^2 = 7.701$   $p = .006$  ( $n = 3$ ). The 'Yes' respondents' mean and median scores were as follows: ( $n = 28$ ),  $\bar{x} = 1.27$ ,  $M = 1$ , and the 'No' respondents provided higher mean and median scores: ( $n = 8$ ),  $\bar{x} = 3.13$ ,  $M = 2$ .

Clearly, those who lead musical activities expressed feeling significantly less inhibited about leading music activities than the rest of the sample. Of course included in the 'Yes' group 38% are those with the job title 'musician' and their

feelings of inhibition would be expected to be lower than those of non-musicians, yet neither group of respondents agreed strongly with this item.

#### *Emotion-Negative Practitioners*

Table 5.15 below shows results in the **Emotion-negative** category. It can be seen that practitioners tend to disagree with the statement: ‘I feel inhibited about leading music as part of my work’ (Q.10), although their responses were more in agreement with notions of parental embarrassment or nervousness (Q.15-17). More positive still were their attitudes to the perceived increases in confidence and decreases in nervousness that they believe parents experience from attending the sessions.

| Practitioners<br><b>Emotion-negative</b> items<br>1= Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree                  | $\bar{x}$        | M            |
|---|------------------|--------------|
| Q.10 I feel inhibited about leading music (n=36)  | $\bar{x} = 3.02$ | M = 1        |
| Q.15 I think many adults are embarrassed about singing with their children and other adults in a group (n=42) | $\bar{x} = 5.7$  | M = 6        |
| Q.16 I believe this embarrassment is because of feelings about their own musical ability (n=42)               | $\bar{x} = 5.75$ | M = 6        |
| Q.17 I believe this embarrassment is about feeling nervous in groups’ (n=42)                                  | $\bar{x} = 5.52$ | M = 6        |
| <b>Q.18 I think attending music groups can increase confidence in parents’/carers’ musical ability (n=43)</b> | $\bar{x} = 6.21$ | <b>M = 7</b> |
| <b>Q.19 I think attending music groups can help parents/carers with feeling less nervous in groups (n=43)</b> | $\bar{x} = 6.21$ | <b>M = 6</b> |

Table 5.15 Practitioners’ results Emotion-negative items

When the datasets were combined some differences were found between the two groups. The one significant result in **Emotion-positive** category was item 7b./5b.: improves my/parents’ mood: Parents (n=81),  $\bar{x} = 7.91$ , M = 8, Practitioners (n= 49),  $\bar{x} = 9.18$ , M = 10,  $p < .000$ , (n=130)  $r = 0.34$  (medium effect size).

The practitioner sample, with a median score of 10 seemed to perceive that the music group improved parents' mood significantly more than parent sample reported was the case.

In the **Emotion-negative** category (pertaining to parents' feeling nervous about attending the music groups) those parents who had answered that they were nervous about attending the music group were then asked was this nervousness due to their perceived musical ability, for which the mean and median scores were: Parents (n=49)  $\bar{x} = 3.75$ , M=4, or because they were nervous of groups, to which they responded with the following mean and median scores: parents (n=48),  $\bar{x} = 3.71$ , M = 4. The practitioner results for Q.16 'nervous about their musical ability' were: practitioners (n=42),  $\bar{x} = 6.02$ , M = 6.5. A Mann-Whitney between groups *U* test revealed a difference between the two groups:  $U = 370.50$ ,  $z = -5.34$ ,  $p < 0.00$  (n =90),  $r = 0.56$ , with a medium effect size.

For Q.17 'nervous of groups' the practitioner results were: (n=42)  $\bar{x} = 5.52$ , M = 6 and the Mann-Whitney between groups comparison also revealed a significant difference between these two groups of participants:  $U = 436.00$ ,  $z = -4.71$ ,  $p < 0.00$ , (n=90),  $r = 0.50$ , also with a medium effect size.

Question 16/18 asked participants whether they believed that attending music groups led to an increase in confidence in their/the parents' musical ability. The parents' mean and median scores were: (n=78),  $\bar{x} = 4.22$ , M = 4, as compared with the practitioners' scores: (n=43),  $\bar{x} = 6.21$ , M = 7. The Mann-Whitney *U* test between the two groups revealed that this practitioner sample appeared to believe that a greater increase in confidence was experienced by the parents than they reported themselves. ( $U = 595.00$ ,  $z = -5.98$ ,  $p < .000$  (n=121),  $r = 0.54$ , medium effect size).

In these samples of parents and practitioners, the practitioners perceived that parents felt more nervous about attending the music groups than the parents reported and they perceived that a significantly greater increase in confidence existed in musical ability than parents reported themselves.

### **(III) Learning Category (including Parenting)**

This category includes items that relate to both children's and parents' learning through the music group sessions. The interview study (Phase 1) generated themes associated with the informal learning environment of the music group, namely the opportunity for parents to see activities modelled, to get ideas to use at home and for children to practise various skills to help their development, as well as learning about music. Music is viewed by some in early childhood as a useful tool for aiding other areas of children's development and there is much research evidence in the field that supports the 'transfer' benefits of music to other areas of learning. The 'readiness for school' agenda of the current (2014) coalition government in the UK perpetuates the view that the usefulness of music education for the rest of the curriculum may be more important than the intrinsic value of music for its own sake, as a desirable and valid aspect of every child's education in early childhood and beyond: most music educators would reverse this emphasis.

Within this section the themes of 'Musical' and 'Parenting' are also included: these are both sub-groups under the umbrella of Learning. The 'Musical' items largely relate to children's learning and 'Parenting' items naturally belong to the adult learning aspect.

## Parent Questionnaire Results

### *Children's learning*

Discussed earlier in this chapter was the positioning of the top three reasons for attending music groups. In the **Learning category** item 7e. was ranked in third place: 'music helps my children's overall learning ( $n = 82$ )  $\bar{x} = 8.83$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ . 50 % of the parents gave the rating 10/10 (very important), and 83% scored it between 8-10.

For item 7f: 'my child learns about music' ( $n = 82$ ,  $\bar{x} = 8.77$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ) 52.4% of the parents gave the rating 10/10 and 79% scored it between 8-10. It would seem that music's benefit to overall learning is seen as slightly more beneficial to children than the improvement to musical skills.

A further question (Q. 29) asked for selection of: 1 = not beneficial, 2 = beneficial, 3 = very beneficial, 4 = don't know. The benefits to speech and language skills were considered to be the most beneficial, with 85.3% selecting 'very beneficial' and 0% selecting 'not beneficial', whereas the equivalent figures for 'learning traditional songs' were: 59.4% 'very beneficial', 36.2% 'beneficial' and 4.3% 'not beneficial'. The results are shown in full in Table 5.16 below:

Table 5.16 Mean and standard deviations Q.29: Learning items-Parents

| Q.29                                       | n  | Minimum<br>* | Maximum<br>* | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|----|--------------|--------------|------|--------------------|
| Speech and language skills Q.29c.          | 68 | 2            | 3            | 2.85 | 0.36               |
| Physical development Q.29d.                | 70 | 1            | 3            | 2.56 | 0.61               |
| Music helps with all their learning Q.29e. | 71 | 1            | 3            | 2.70 | 0.52               |
| Their musical skills Q.29f.                | 70 | 1            | 3            | 2.71 | 0.49               |
| Their singing has improved Q.29g.          | 57 | 1            | 3            | 2.56 | 0.60               |
| They learn traditional songs Q.29j.        | 69 | 1            | 3            | 2.55 | 0.58               |

\* '4 = Don't know' was removed from the dataset to measure mean and SD

The mean scores of these items reveal positive results on all items (Median = 3), indicating positive parental perceptions of the benefits to children's learning in attending music group sessions.

*4 = Don't know results*

The number of missing scores in items 29g. (n=57), arise from the participants' selection of 4 = don't know, responses which were removed from the dataset to give accurate mean and SD results.

The percentages of participants scoring 4 (don't know) for each item were:

|                         |      |                     |      |
|-------------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| Socialisation (a.)      | 4.1% | Interaction (b.)    | 0.0% |
| S and L (c.)            | 6.8% | Physical (d.)       | 2.8% |
| Music all learning (e.) | 2.7% | Musical skills (f.) | 4.1% |

|                              |              |                              |      |
|------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------|
| <b>Singing improved (g.)</b> | <b>19.7%</b> | Love music group (h.)        | 4.1% |
| Express feelings (i.)        | 7.2%         | Learn traditional songs (j.) | 2.8% |

Nearly 20% of the participants did not know whether their ‘Child 1’s’ singing had improved, and crosstabulation of the data as shown in Table 5.17 below

demonstrates that the majority of this percentage (n=12) had a child aged between 0-1year. It would not be possible to assess accurately the singing improvement in a child under one year of age accurately, as their singing voices are yet to develop: other vocalisations and babbling are most appropriate developmentally at this stage.

**Singing improved \* Age of child/ren 0-1,1y, 2y, 3y, 4y+**

| Frequency of response: Child 1 |                 | 0-1,1y, 2y, 3y, 4y+ |    |    |    |     | Total |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----|----|----|-----|-------|
|                                |                 | 0-1                 | 1y | 2y | 3y | 4y+ |       |
| singing improved               | not beneficial  | 2                   | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0   | 3     |
|                                | beneficial      | 1                   | 6  | 10 | 2  | 0   | 19    |
|                                | very beneficial | 4                   | 12 | 9  | 7  | 3   | 35    |
|                                | don't know      | 12                  | 2  | 0  | 0  | 0   | 14    |
| Total                          |                 | 19                  | 20 | 20 | 9  | 3   | 71    |

Table 5.17 Child 1: ‘Singing improved’ results

*Parents’ learning*

When parents were asked about their own learning about child development, parenting skills, and their role in the group, their mean scores were considerably lower than those on the equivalent items for the children’s learning.

| Parent item  | n  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std.Deviation |
|--|----|---------|---------|------|---------------|
| I have learned about my child's development Q.18                                   | 78 | 2       | 7       | 5.09 | 1.53          |
| Being led by the music leader allows me to relax and participate Q.19              | 78 | 2       | 7       | 5.82 | 1.29          |
| I'd like to take more of a leading role in the group Q.20                          | 78 | 1       | 7       | 3.05 | 1.95          |
| I'd like to take more of a leading role with my child in the music sessions Q.22   | 76 | 1       | 7       | 3.33 | 1.75          |
| My parenting skills have improved because of what I've learned at music group Q.28 | 68 | 1       | 7       | 4.32 | 1.99          |

Table 5.18 'Parents' learning' items - Mean scores – Parent

As with the **Social** and **Emotion** theme categories parents scored the items relating to themselves lower than those items relating to their children. What also seems to be indicated by the results in the Table 5.18 is that the majority of parents in this sample do not want to take a leading role in the music group sessions. (Q.20 and Q.22 both have mean scores at the low end of the Likert scale). Question 28 asks parents to comment on any improvement to their parenting skills, and about a quarter of the sample did not respond (Missing n = 23). The mean of 4.32 is around the mid-point on the Likert scale, so represents a neutral position. Although parents were more positive about learning about their child's development Q.18 (mean = 5.09), when asked to comment on their own participation, they gave lower scores (or none at all).



*Who benefits most from attending the music group?- Learning - Parents*

When the data from Q.32 in the **Learning category** were analysed (see Table 5.19 below) it appeared that the parental learning benefits were acknowledged, with a higher percentage of responses indicating benefits to parents in this category than in other category responses (such as Emotion or Social items). Although the majority of responses were 'All', showing that parent and child are seen as benefitting from increased awareness and understanding of children's learning, over 10% of participants believe that they alone benefit. Around 5% participants believe that only the child benefits from this increased knowledge.

|        | Q.32c. I learn the songs (n=62) | Q.32d. I learn techniques to use with my child (n =65) | Q.32e. Being part of my child's learning experience (n = 68) |
|--------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Parent | <b>Me 11%</b>                   | <b>Me = 14%</b>  | <b>Me = 13%</b>  |
|        | All 84%                         | All = 78%  | All = 81%  |
|        | Child 5%                        | Child = 8%   | Child = 6%   |

Table 5.19 Who benefits most? Learning – Parent results

**Practitioner Questionnaire Results**

Table 5.20 below, shows the benefits of music to other learning areas which were considered to have the greatest learning benefit by practitioners:

| Adult/child learn together 20c. | Learning across the curriculum 14g. | Benefits to Speech and Language Development 14f. | Led by practitioner 14b. | Child learns about music 5f. | Music helps other learning 5e. | Rating scale 1 = least important 10 = very important (Select same rating more than once) |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 43                              | 43                                  | 43   | 42                       | 49                           | <b>49</b>                      | N Valid  |
| 6                               | 6                                   | 6  | 7                        | 0                            | <b>0</b>                       | Missing  |
| 9.40                            | 8.33                                | <b>9.72</b>                                      | 7.57                     | 8.57                         | <b>9.86</b>                    | Mean   |
| <b>10</b>                       | 9                                   | <b>10</b>  | 8.50                     | 9                            | <b>10</b>                      | Median   |
| 1.348                           | 1.899                               | .766   | 2.461                    | 1.594                        | <b>.408</b>                    | SD   |
| 5                               | 3                                   | 7  | 2                        | 5                            | <b>8</b>                       | Minimum  |
| 10                              | 10                                  | 10   | 10                       | 10                           | <b>10</b>                      | Maximum  |

Table 5.20 Practitioners' rating scale results –benefits of music **Learning**

The item with the highest mean score was 5e. 'Music helps other learning' (n=49), with 14f. 'Benefits to speech and language development' (n=43), and 20c.

'Adult/Child learn together' (n=43), also having similar high mean scores. These results are at the top of a very positively skewed dataset, giving an indication of the practitioners' very positive perceptions about the educational and learning benefits of music: this was a weakness of the rating scale question type that allowed the same rating to be selected more than once.

The use of a question using ranks overcame this weakness to some extent. When practitioner participants were asked to rank a selection of theme category items from most to least important, the **Learning** category items were positioned mid-way in the ranking scale (from 1-11): 'Learning: Music' 8e.  $\bar{x}$  = 7.12, M = 8 and 'Learning: Curriculum' 8f.  $\bar{x}$  = 8.83, M = 9. 'Developmental benefits' 8g.  $\bar{x}$  = 3.98, M = 3.5, may be perceived as: communication skills, personal, social and emotional

development, and physical development. This item is ranked the most important of the three learning items as shown in Table 5.21 below

| Ranking<br>most<br>important = 1 <sup>st</sup><br>– least<br>important=11 <sup>th</sup><br>place | Learning:<br>Music<br>8e. | Learning:<br>Curriculum<br>8f. | Developmental<br>benefits<br>8g. |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| N Valid  | 42                        | 41                             | 42                               |
| Missing  | 7                         | 8                              | 7                                |
| Mean   | 7.12                      | 8.83                           | 3.98                             |
| Median   | 8                         | 9                              | 3.50                             |
| SD   | 2.36                      | 1.86                           | 1.99                             |
| Minimum  | 1                         | 1                              | 1                                |
| Maximum  | 11                        | 11                             | 10                               |

Table 5.21 Rank order Learning items - Practitioners

It would seem that although the learning benefit items were given similar ratings as each other, when participants were asked to rank them alongside other theme category items, they were not positioned as highly as might have been expected from their high mean score rating.

### *Parenting*

When practitioner participants were asked to rank the different items concerning the benefits of attending music sessions on a list from ‘most important’ to ‘least important’, Parenting items appeared towards the end of the list. The median scores of ‘Learning from modelling’ M = 6, ‘Parenting skills’ M =7, and ‘Parents have been advised to attend’ M =11, give an indication of the rank order position (see Table 5.22)

| Ranking<br>most<br>important = 1 <sup>st</sup><br>– least<br>important=11 <sup>th</sup><br>place | Parenting<br>skills<br>8i. | Parents<br>advised<br>to<br>attend<br>8j. | Learning<br>from<br>modelling<br>8k. |
|--|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| N Valid  | 42                         | 39  | 42                                   |
| Missing  | 7                          | 10  | 7                                    |
| <b>Mean</b>  | <b>6.57</b>                | <b>10.36</b>                              | <b>5.93</b>                          |
| <b>Median</b>  | <b>7</b>                   | <b>11</b>                                 | <b>6</b>                             |
| SD   | 2.050                      | 1.478                                     | 2.33                                 |
| Minimum  | 2                          | 4   | 2                                    |
| Maximum  | 10                         | 11  | 10                                   |

Table 5.22 Rank order Parenting items - Practitioners

Although parenting items were perceived as being less important perhaps than other theme category items by practitioners, the **Learning** category data in Question 23 (shown in Table 5.23 below) suggests that practitioners believed there was a greater benefit to parents in their learning techniques, and songs to use with their children, than did the parents in this sample. The Table (5.23) also shows that these parents valued being part of their child's learning experience slightly more than these practitioners believed they did, and interestingly, parents perceived that their children benefitted from their (the parents) learning more strongly than did the practitioners (across all three items).

|               |  |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| Q.32          | Parent/Carer learns the songs (n=43) Q23c. | Parent/Carer learn techniques to use with their children Q23d. | Parent/Carer is part of their child's learning experience Q 23f. |
| Practitioners | <b>Parent 16.3%</b>                        | <b>Parent 23.3%</b>  | <b>Parent 11.6%</b>  |
|               | Both 81.4%                                 | Both 74.4%   | Both 88.4%   |
|               | Child 2.3%                                 | Child 2.3%   | Child 0%   |
| Q.32          | I learn the songs (n=62) Q32c.             | I learn techniques to use with my child (n =65) Q32d.          | Being part of my child's learning experience (n = 68) Q 32e.     |
| Parent        | <b>Me 11.3%</b>                            | <b>Me = 15.4%</b>  | <b>Me = 13.2%</b>  |
|               | All 83.9%                                  | All = 76.9%  | All = 80.9%  |
|               | Child 4.8%                                 | Child = 7.7%   | Child = 5.9%   |

Table 5.23 Practitioner and Parent results 'Parents' Learning' items

Within the practitioner sample, associations were explored between the different professional groups, and some differences were found between Musicians and the other two job title groups (CC practitioners and Managers) on item **8g**:

**'Developmental benefits'** (a ranking, forced-choice, question with 1 = most important, 11= least important). The Musicians' mean and median scores were: n = 11,  $\bar{x}$  = 5.55, M = 6. By comparison the Children's Centre practitioners' results were: n = 21,  $\bar{x}$  = 3.48, M = 3.00; and those of the Managers were: n = 10,  $\bar{x}$  = 3.3, M =3.

These results appear to indicate that musicians are not as strongly positive about the developmental benefits for children as the Children's Centre practitioners or the managers.

Children's Centre practitioners were slightly more positively inclined towards the benefits gained from adult and child learning together than either the managers or the musicians, as the following results appear to indicate from 'Adult/Child learn together' item: a rating scale question, not forced-choice, with 1= not important, 10 =

most important. The Children's Centre practitioners' high mean and median scores of:  $n=22$ ,  $\bar{x} = 9.86$ ,  $M = 10$  were followed by the Musicians' scores of:  $n = 11$ ,  $\bar{x} = 8.91$ ,  $M = 10$ , and finally the Managers' scores were:  $n = 10$ ,  $\bar{x} = 8.9$ ,  $M = 9.5$ . It must be acknowledged that this slight difference is within a very positive narrow range between mean scores of 8.9 and 9.86 and that there were only small numbers of participants in each practitioner group.

A final difference was identified in item 22f: 'their musical skills' (1='not beneficial', 2= 'beneficial', 3 = 'very beneficial', 4 = 'don't know'). Both Musicians and Children's Centre practitioners in this sample perceived that developing children's musical skills was more beneficial than did the managers. The Musician group scored this item the highest of the job role groups with mean and median scores of:  $n = 11$ ,  $\bar{x} = 2.91$ ,  $M = 3$ . The Children's Centre practitioners' scores were:  $n = 22$ ,  $\bar{x} = 2.64$ ,  $M = 3$ , and lastly the Manager groups' results were:  $n = 9$ ,  $\bar{x} = 2.22$ ,  $M = 2$ . It would appear that these musicians considered that developing a child's musical skills was slightly more beneficial than did the participants in these other two practitioner groups.

#### Combined Datasets Results

When datasets from practitioners and parents were compared some differences were found between the two groups. The results showed that the practitioner sample was significantly more positive about the following two items than were the parent sample:

‘music helps children’s overall learning’, (item 5e. practitioners, 7e. parents),

Practitioners,  $n = 49$ ,  $\bar{x} = 9.86$ ,  $M = 10$ ,

Parents,  $n = 82$ ,  $\bar{x} = 8.83$ ,  $M = 9.5$ .

‘parents learn about child development by attending music group’ (Q.18),

Practitioners,  $n = 43$ ,  $\bar{x} = 6.05$ ,  $M = 6$ ,

Parents,  $n = 78$ ,  $\bar{x} = 5.09$ ,  $M = 5$ .

The learning and developmental benefits for both children and parents that were identified as being emphasised by the practitioners in the interview study also seemed to be more important to the practitioner sample in the questionnaire study as compared to the parent sample.

#### **(IV) Teaching**

##### **Parent Questionnaire Results**

In the interview study the area of teaching included some self-contradictory views from parents, expressing the positive enjoyment of familiar songs and repetition on one hand, and the view that sessions were too repetitive and that new songs were helpful on the other. The questionnaire data provided some further evidence for these findings.

| (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree) | Sessions too repetitive Q.21 | Like familiar songs Q.23 | Familiar songs builds child's confidence Q.24 | New songs stretches child's development Q.25 |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| N Valid                                 | 77                           | 78                       | 76  | 77   |
| N Missing                               | 14                           | 13                       | 15  | 14   |
| <b>Mean</b>                             | <b>3.53</b>                  | <b>5.78</b>              | <b>5.78</b>                                   | <b>5.47</b>                                  |
| Median                                  | 3                            | 6                        | 6   | 6  |
| SD                                      | 1.77                         | 1.20                     | 1.24  | 1.31   |
| Minimum                                 | 1                            | 2                        | 1   | 2  |
| Maximum                                 | 7                            | 7                        | 7   | 7  |

Table 5.24 Parent results – Music session structure items

Based on the mean and median scores the data in Table 5.24 above shows that parents tend to disagree with the statement (Q.21) that ‘the sessions are too repetitive’. The identical mean score for items 23 and 24 shows parity between liking familiar songs and the belief that they build their child’s confidence. It would seem that they are very slightly less positive that new songs stretch their child’s development. These results suggest that this sample of parents favours familiar structure with repetition of familiar songs in order to build their children’s confidence, although none of these results were overwhelmingly positive.

#### *A ‘typical’ music session*

As this topic for research is a largely unexplored area there is no evidence of what constitutes a typical music session in a Children’s Centre. The interview study data provided a list of items for further exploration. Table 5.25 shows that the standard deviation for all items is large, showing a wide range of opinion on favourite items. There is a large number of missing cases in this question: the reasons why are unclear, but may indicate a lack of interest, a lack of appropriate knowledge, or items that did not match participants’ experiences of music group.



| Q.30<br>Rank favourite<br>first,<br>least favourite<br>last | N<br>valid | N<br>missing | Mean        | Median | SD   | Ranking |
|---|------------|--------------|-------------|--------|------|---------|
| <b>Playing<br/>Instruments</b>                              | <b>57</b>  | <b>34</b>    | <b>4.25</b> | 4      | 2.96 | 1       |
| Songs with<br>child's name/<br>suggestions                  | 56         | 35           | 5.63        | 6      | 2.71 |         |
| Structured<br>format  | 53         | 38           | 5.94        | 6      | 2.38 |         |
| <b>Singing<br/>familiar songs</b>                           | <b>57</b>  | <b>34</b>    | <b>4.89</b> | 5      | 2.93 | 3       |
| Song requests   | 54         | 37           | 6.89        | 7      | 2.01 |         |
| <b>Use of props</b>   | <b>57</b>  | <b>34</b>    | <b>4.84</b> | 4      | 2.87 | 2       |
| Hiding games  | 55         | 36           | 5.84        | 6      | 2.37 |         |
| Puppets   | 53         | 38           | 6.72        | 7      | 2.14 |         |
| Follows<br>child<br>spontaneously                           | 49         | 42           | 7.14        | 8      | 2.35 |         |

Table 5.25 Results of ranking typical music session items – Parents

The comparison of mean scores indicates that ‘playing instruments’ is most popular ( $\bar{x} = 4.25$ ,  $M = 4$ ), as well as ‘use of props’ ( $\bar{x} = 4.84$ ,  $M = 4$ ), and ‘singing familiar songs’ ( $\bar{x} = 4.89$ ,  $M = 5$ ). When participants were asked whether their child disliked any elements of the music session (Q.31), the majority of the sample selected ‘none’. Table 5.26 below shows the results. Only 5 respondents selected an item and 27 respondents did not answer the question. Although ‘playing instruments’ was a popular activity it was also selected as an activity that some children dislike.

|         |                              | Frequency | Percent |
|---------|------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid   | <b>playing instruments</b>   | 2         | 2       |
|         | songs with child suggestions | 1         | 1       |
|         | song requests                | 1         | 1       |
|         | Puppets                      | 1         | 1       |
|         | None                         | 59        | 65      |
|         | Total                        | 64        | 70      |
| Missing | System                       | 27        | 30      |
| Total   |                              | 91        | 100.0   |

Table 5.26 Results - children's dislikes, musical elements – Parents

### Practitioners - Questionnaire Results

Question 6 asked practitioners: Do you lead musical activities? Table 5.28 below shows the frequency counts of the Yes/No responses and their respective job titles.

| 1=musicians, 2=CCpractitioners, 3=Managers<br>Do you lead musical activities? |                                 | Response |    | Total |
|---|---------------------------------|----------|----|-------|
|   |                                 | Yes      | No |       |
| 1= musicians,   | Musician                        | 11       | 1  | 12    |
| 2= CCpractitioners,   | Children's Centre practitioners | 15       | 9  | 24    |
| 3= Managers   | Managers                        | 3        | 8  | 11    |
| Total   |                                 | 29       | 18 | 47    |

Table 5.27 responses of 3 practitioner group to 'Do you lead musical activities?'

Leading musical activities is not the preserve of musicians alone, as 62.5% of the Children's Centre practitioners ( $n = 24$ ) and nearly 30% of the Managers ( $n = 11$ ) had agreed to lead music activities (Q6). This result was unexpected and may have implications for professional development and qualification.

Question 7 invited participants to select those items that they included in their music sessions. Table 5.28 below shows the results for each item. Attitudes about what

might constitute a ‘musical activity’ may vary from individual to individual: this selection of items came from interview study data, and no other items were added.

| Question 7                         | Frequency<br>Yes<br>(n=49) | Percent<br><br>% | Do you lead activities?<br>Q6<br><br>Yes      No |            | Who:<br>Musician (Mus)<br>Children’s<br>Centre<br>practitioners:<br>(CC)<br>Managers:<br>(Mger) |       |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|--|------------|---|-------|
| Playing instruments                | 29                         | 59.2             | n=25   | n=4        | Mus   | n=12  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n=13  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n=4   |
| Songs with child’s name/suggestion | 27                         | 55.1             | n=25   | n=2        | Mus   | n=11  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n=12  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n=4   |
| Structured format                  | 22                         | 44.9             | n=19   | n=3        | Mus   | n=9   |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n=9   |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n=4   |
| <b>Singing familiar songs</b>      | <b>32</b>                  | <b>65.3</b>      | <b>n=28</b>                                      | <b>n=4</b> | Mus   | n=12  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n=16  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n=4   |
| Song requests                      | 28                         | 57.1             | n=24   | n=4        | Mus   | n=11  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n=13  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n=4   |
| <b>Lots of repetition</b>          | <b>32</b>                  | <b>65.3</b>      | <b>n=29</b>                                      | <b>n=3</b> | Mus   | n=11  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n=17  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n=4   |
| Use of props                       | 28                         | 57.1             | n=25   | n=3        | Mus   | n=12  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n=13  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n=3   |
| Hiding games                       | 25                         | 51               | n=22   | n=3        | Mus   | n=12  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n= 9  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n= 4  |
| Puppets                            | 20                         | 40.8             | n=19   | n=1        | Mus   | n= 10 |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n= 9  |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n= 1  |
| New/unusual songs                  | 25                         | 51               | n=21   | n=4        | Mus   | n =11 |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n= 11 |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n= 3  |
| Follows child spontaneously        | 24                         | 49               | n=20   | n=4        | Mus   | n =12 |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | CC  | n= 10 |
|                                    |                            |                  |  |            | Mger  | n= 2  |

Table 5.28 Results of items included in music sessions - Practitioners

Table 5.28 shows that singing familiar songs and including lots of repetition as part of the session were selected by 65.3% of the practitioner sample, the largest percentage of all items. This finding supports the results of the parent questionnaire that revealed that most parents do not find the sessions too repetitive and broadly, that they like familiar songs and feel that they help to build their child's confidence. Practitioners were asked to add any additional items that they included in their sessions, and the list below shows the contributions and the job titles of the contributors (all respondents lead musical activities)

|                              |                  |     |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| • Listening                  | Musicians        | n=2 |
| • Musical free play          | Musicians        | n=3 |
| • Use of photos/video/story  | Musicians        | n=1 |
|                              | CC practitioners | n=1 |
| • Action songs               | CC practitioners | n=1 |
| • Family interaction moments | CC practitioners | n=1 |
| • 'Liquid' structure         | CC practitioners | n=1 |

Some of these items relate quite closely to those offered in the list, such as 'follows child spontaneously' (musical free play and 'liquid' structure). 'Listening' was not mentioned in the interview study data, but was included by two musicians here.

Question 9 was aimed at the non-specialist music practitioners so as to explore whether music is being used in situations other than the specific music session. Participants were asked to select any items that they might include as part of their work, and the results were as follows:

|  | %    |
|--|------|
| • Singing as part of a session (n=10)                                | 20.4 |
| • Playing CD (n=8)   | 16.3 |
| • Using instruments with parents/carers and children (n=9)           | 18.4 |
| • Talk about the benefits of music/singing with parents/carers (n=9) | 18.4 |
| • I don't use any music in my work (n=3)                             | 6.1  |

When compared with the findings from the interview participants there is a small difference in emphasis. The practitioners in the interview study (n=10) played instruments most frequently as part of their work with families, with singing familiar songs and playing audio CDs as the next most popular items. Of those who use music as part of their work in the questionnaire sample of practitioners, singing as part of the session is the most popular item.

## (V) Links to home

### Parent Questionnaire Results

Parents appear to be making links to home with music from the sessions. This might involve singing more at home, using songs from the daily routine with their child, or music being more important at home. The results are displayed in Table 5.29 below and they show that the majority of the sample selected between 4 and 6 on the seven-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree) across all four of the items related to **Links to home**. Perceived improvement to their child's mood through using the songs at home is the highest placed item in terms of mean and median scores.

|           | Sing more at home<br>Q8 | Use songs for daily routines<br>Q9 | <b>Songs improve child's mood<br/>Q10</b> | Family sing more<br>Q11 | Music more important at home<br>Q12 |
|-----------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Valid N   | 80                      | 81                                 | <b>81</b>                                 | 78                      | 79                                  |
| Missing N | 11                      | 10                                 | <b>10</b>                                 | 13                      | 12                                  |
| Mean      | 5.33                    | 4.98                               | <b>5.91</b>                               | 4.95                    | 4.78                                |
| Median    | 5                       | 5                                  | <b>6</b>                                  | 5                       | 5                                   |
| SD        | 1.68                    | 1.62                               | <b>1.16</b>                               | 1.56                    | 1.55                                |

Table 5.29 Links to home –Parents

Question 26 asked parents to respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the statement; ‘I have used ideas learned from the sessions at home’: 66% answered Yes, 10% answered No (n=69), with 24% as missing data. The associations were explored between those who answered either Yes or No to Question 26 and those question items that related to Links to Home - Questions 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. Some associations were found between the two groups of participants:

Question 8 – ‘I sing more at home as a result of going to music group at the Children’s Centre’ – Yes (n =60),  $\bar{x} = 5.7$ , M = 6, No (n =8)  $\bar{x} = 3.75$ , M = 3.5;

Question 9 – ‘Using the songs during the day helps with the daily routine with my child/ren’, Yes (n = 60),  $\bar{x} = 5.18$ , M = 5, No (n = 9),  $\bar{x} = 4.11$ , M = 4.  $U = 162.50$ ,  $z = -1.96$ ,  $p < .05$ , (n=69),  $r = 0.24$ ; Question 11 – ‘Other members of the family sing more at home’ - Yes (n = 59),  $\bar{x} = 5.24$ , M = 5, No (n = 7),  $\bar{x} = 3.71$ , M = 3,  $U = 101.50$ ,  $z = -2.24$ ,  $p < .025$ , (n = 66),  $r = 0.28$ ; Question 12 – ‘music has become more important at home’ - Yes (n=58),  $\bar{x} = 5.03$ , M = 5, No (n=9),  $\bar{x} = 3.67$ , M = 3.  $U = 124.00$ ,  $z = -2.56$ ,  $p < .010$ , (n = 67),  $r = 0.31$ . In all the analyses above the statistical results are of small/medium effect size (Cohen 1988).

These results suggest that for those participants who used the ideas at home, music became more important in several ways in the home environment. There may be many other reasons why music is more important in these homes: those participants who feel able to use the ideas at home may be more music-aware anyway, and feel more confident in using music and song alone in the home.

The music sessions sometimes make use of readily available props such as battery-operated lights, puppets, scarves and simple instruments. Parents were asked

whether they had purchased/made props or materials used in the sessions at home (Q.27): The percentage of Yes/No responses for both ‘I have used ideas from sessions at home’ and ‘I have purchased/made props from the sessions’ items are shown below in Table 5.30

Table 5.30 Percentage responses of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ groups to; ‘I have used ideas from the sessions at home’ and ‘I have purchased/made props from the sessions to use at home’ items

|         | Used ideas from sessions at home (n=69) | Purchased/made props for use at home (n=71) |
|---------|---|---|
| Yes     | 66%                                     | 43%   |
| No      | 10%                                     | 35%   |
| Missing | 24%                                     | 22%   |
| Total   | 100%                                    | 100%  |

Mann-Whitney *U* tests were carried out with **Links to home** data from questions; 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and the Yes/No groups of ‘I have purchased/made props for use at home’ item (Q.27) but none were statistically significant. The purchasing or making of materials does not appear to make a significant difference to the linking of music to home. However, parents using the ideas from the sessions at home seems to make a significant difference in leading to more family singing and an increase in the perceived status of music in the home environment, as well as in the use of songs helping with the daily routines with their child.

## Practitioner Questionnaire Results

Practitioners were asked three questions relating to the **Links to home** category

(Likert scale 1='Strongly Disagree', 7 = 'Strongly Agree')

Q.11 – 'I believe that parents/carers sing more at home as a result of going to music group at the Children's Centre'.

Q.12 – 'I believe parents/carers use the songs during the day to help with the daily routine with their child'

Q.13 – 'I believe that other members of the family sing more at home because of sharing songs from the music groups'.

| Item:                       | Parent<br>n      | mean | median | Practitioners<br>n      | mean     | median   |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------|--------|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| Sing more at home           | 80<br>11 missing | 5.3  | 5      | <b>43<br/>6 missing</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>6</b> |
| Use songs in daily routines | 81<br>10 missing | 5    | 5      | <b>43<br/>6 missing</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>5</b> |
| Family sing more            | 78<br>13 missing | 5    | 5      | <b>43<br/>6 missing</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>5</b> |

Table 5.31 Practitioner and Parent results - Links to home data

The results in Table 5.31 show that 'Sing more at home' appears to be the most beneficial item from the practitioners' perspective.

## (VI) Organisational - Practitioners

This data for this theme category is produced from practitioner participants only as it was generated by practitioners during the interview study with two separate strands.

The first is that parents always want more music group sessions to accommodate the numbers wishing to attend, and the second is that offering music groups brings



families into the Centre so that the practitioners can then build a relationship and offer them support where necessary.

The ‘demand from parents’ item was seen to be very important by 37% of the sample (n=49) and was given a ‘neutral’ response by around 35%. When the data were crosstabulated according to job titles it can be seen in Table 5.32 that Children’s Centre practitioners were more positive about ‘demand from parents’ with just under half (48% ) scoring the item as ‘very important’, as compared with 41% of Musicians and 8% of Managers

| Item 5h. ‘Demand from parents’<br>1= musicians,<br>2= CCpractitioners,<br>3= Managers |                       | Practitioner Groups |                                  |          | Total     |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|
|   |                       | Musician            | Children’s Centres practitioners | Managers |           |
| demand  | 0                     | 0                   | 1                                | 1        | 2         |
| from  | 3                     | 0                   | 1                                | 0        | 1         |
| parents   | 4                     | 0                   | 0                                | 1        | 1         |
| Rating  | 5                     | 4                   | 0                                | 1        | 5         |
| 1-10  | 6                     | 3                   | 2                                | 1        | 6         |
|   | 7                     | 0                   | 2                                | 4        | 6         |
|   | 8                     | 0                   | 6                                | 1        | 7         |
|   | 9                     | 0                   | 1                                | 2        | 3         |
|   | <b>very important</b> | <b>5</b>            | <b>12</b>                        | <b>1</b> | <b>18</b> |
| Total   |                       | 12                  | 25                               | 12       | 49        |

Table 5.32 Demand from parents for music groups – Practitioners’ results

The results in Table 5.33 show that music groups were seen as very important in bringing families into the Children’s Centre: over half the sample 57% (n=43) scored ‘Good way to bring families in’ as ‘very important’.

| Item 24d ‘Good way to bring families in to the Centre’  |                       | Practitioner Groups |                                  |          | Total     |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|
|   |                       | Musician            | Children’s Centres practitioners | Managers |           |
| brings families in 1=least important, 10=very important | 5                     | 0                   | 1                                | 0        | 1         |
|   | 6                     | 1                   | 1                                | 2        | 4         |
|   | 7                     | 0                   | 0                                | 1        | 1         |
|   | 8                     | 0                   | 1                                | 2        | 3         |
|   | 9                     | 1                   | 4                                | 1        | 6         |
|   | <b>very important</b> | <b>9</b>            | <b>15</b>                        | <b>4</b> | <b>28</b> |
| Total   |                       | 11                  | 22                               | 10       | 43        |

Table 5.33 Good way to bring families into the Centre - Practitioners’ results

## 5.5 Summary of the results and discussion

The results from the questionnaire study confirmed some of the findings from the interview study and also revealed new information about parents’ and practitioners’ perceptions, which differed significantly in some areas. As the second study in a sequential design the questionnaire was useful in clarifying the rationale that had emerged from the interview study. It was possible to conduct analyses not only between parent and practitioner groups but also within the two groups, which provided additional depth that also assisted in answering the research questions.

What was unexpected was the overall extremely positive response from participants. Those who chose to participate in the questionnaire had very positive responses to many of the questions: it was certainly undeniable that both parents and practitioners perceived that music groups are beneficial to children, parents and to the Children’s Centre.

### 5.5.1 Results from the questionnaire

There were several unexpected results. First was the surprisingly large number of very young children who were participating in the music group activities: over 80% of all the children in the sample were two years old or younger.

There were also some unexplained and unexpected results relating to the age group of parents. It appeared that being in the majority age group (27-35 years) positively influenced the parents' experiences. More than half the Children's Centre practitioners and more than a quarter of the managers led musical activities and the results indicated that the majority feel confident in doing so: paradoxically they also believed that some adults are embarrassed about singing in a group.

Parents and practitioners expressed differences between what they considered the most important benefits and reasons for attending/including music groups at a Children's Centre. Broadly, parents were more concerned with the positive benefits for their child and were less interested in any benefits for themselves, although what emerged through the comparison between various questions was that the one-to-one interaction time (between parent and child) was felt to be very beneficial to both parent and child by 95% of the parent sample. The practitioner group responses were significantly more positive than those of the parents in almost all items but especially in what they believed the parents would gain from the sessions.

The most important reason for attending the music group for parents was that it makes their child happy and for practitioners that music helps overall learning. The **Social** category results displayed consensus between both parent and practitioner groups' perceptions that the 'one-to-one' interaction between adult and child was very beneficial for both parent and child. As suggested by the interview findings,

over half the parent sample found the ‘observing role’ that the music session offered them was a very important benefit. Comparisons within the practitioner group revealed that Children’s Centre practitioners felt that music’s inclusive nature was more important than did the musicians or the managers.

The **Emotion** category produced some interesting results between and within the two groups. It was here that the 27-35 year age group of parents appeared to be more confident and less nervous about attending the sessions than the other two age groups of parents. Nervousness about attending the music group was marginally higher for those parents who were nervous about groups than for those who were nervous of their musical ability. Those who felt nervous were less likely to experience a lift in their mood as a result of attending the music group. When asked whom they felt benefitted most from the music group, improvements in mood and confidence were perceived as experienced by both parents and children.

The practitioner sample perceived that parents felt more nervous about attending sessions than the parents reported and also that attendance would improve parents’ confidence more than parents said it did.

Results from the **Learning** category indicated that parents were relatively neutral about the effect that the music group had on their parenting skills, and they did not want to take more of a leading role. Their views about their children’s learning from the music group indicated that benefits to overall learning were important as well as the area of speech and language benefits. Practitioners were very positive about three learning items; ‘other areas of learning’, ‘speech and language’ and ‘adult and child learning together’. Further analysis revealed that ‘developmental benefits’ (e.g., personal, social and emotional, motor) were more important than ‘learning in

curriculum areas' or 'learning about music'. The musicians were less concerned about the 'developmental benefits' than the other practitioner group members.

Results from the **Teaching** category showed that parents were not consistent in their favourite items: Playing instruments, using props and singing familiar songs were the most popular. They enjoyed the repetition and singing in familiar songs, whilst valuing new material for their children's development. The most popular items for inclusion by music leaders were singing familiar songs and lots of repetition. Other practitioners (about 20%) who did not lead music groups still made use of music in their work: they sing familiar songs and use instruments or talk about the benefits of music with young children to families.

The **Links to home** category showed differences between groups of parents who used ideas from the sessions at home and those who did not: 'Family members sing more', 'music helps as part of daily routines', and 'music has become more important at home' were emphasised by those who were able to incorporate ideas from the music session in their home life.

Finally, from the **Organisational** category data analysis, practitioners in this sample believed that the music groups were effective in bringing families into the setting.

#### 5.5.2 Discussion of questionnaire study

The unexpected positive skew to the data made it more difficult to gain a sense of where differences in perception or attitudes might be situated. With some median scores of 10 (10= very important) it is clear that everyone was very positive, and this meant that when assessing several items in a question it was difficult to discern

subtle differences: the main conclusion is that participants were very positive overall. By using different question types it was possible to gain some insight into which aspects within a theme category were more important to participants than others.

Worthy of further investigation are the significant results related to age group of parents. Why being in the majority age group (27-35 years) should affect feelings of nervousness and confidence in a significantly positive manner is unclear. The results suggested that parent-child music groups in Children's Centres attracted families with children from the first year of life through to two years old: this is a very young age range for organised group activities, yet music seemed to be successful in meeting the needs of participants, as respondents were so positive about their children's experiences.

Perhaps the socialisation aspect (considered beneficial by both parents and practitioner groups) is 'facilitated' by the music, in that music structures, formalises, and perhaps 'contains' (holds/supports) interactions and helps with feelings of belonging and pleasure through shared affect moments in songs. Very young children tend not to engage with their peers directly so the shared involvement that participation in an action song requires may help them interact together. Parents reported that they enjoyed observing this and saw it as valuable in their children's development. Recent research has shown that music group participation with older children improves a sense of empathy (Rabinowitch et al., 2013), and this may also be happening with very young children and their parents. Practitioners were aware of the wider learning and development outcomes that can be met through musical activity and this was their most important reason for including music groups in their programme.

These findings lead to a strong argument for the requirement for suitable training and qualification for Children's Centre practitioner members to use music in ways that stimulate learning, development and enhanced musical interaction. They clearly acknowledged the learning benefits of music, and the results of this study showed that many non-musicians are leading musical activities - which perhaps indicates the perceived importance of music in centre programmes of activities. Even some practitioners not leading groups are using music in their work with families. What seems to be obvious is the effectiveness and usefulness of familiar songs and musical activities in work in early childhood. What may be lacking is appropriate preparation in the form of musical training for Children's Centre practitioners to extend and develop the ways in which music can be used with young children and families so as to encourage musical play that is more informal, child-led and improvisatory.

The Music One-to-One study (Young et al., 2006) found that mothers use singing and music during their daily routines, and may not prioritise the educational benefits of music. The results from this study also showed that most families used elements from the music group at home, and that as a result music had become more important at home: family members were singing more, and music was used as part of the daily routine. This demonstrates a major benefit of parents attending music sessions with their children - they can learn the songs and the activities through participation and use the material at home. This may be seen as a form of 'guided participation' (Rogoff, 1991), demonstrating that the music group as a social learning environment may be successful in effecting significant changes in daily routines at home. The parental participation and 'learning through doing', which stimulated an interest in music that might otherwise have remained undiscovered, perhaps changing a

family's cultural practices and establishing new ones.



## **Chapter 6**

### **Comparison between music, art and outdoor parent-child activity**

#### **groups: Behavioural observation main study**

##### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the final study (Phase 3) of the research project and helps to position and further interpret the findings and results of the preceding studies. By observing what happens in the group music setting it is possible to understand more clearly the perceptions and attitudes that emerged and were revealed through the interview and questionnaire studies, as reported in chapters four and five.

Non-participant, unobtrusive observation can help overcome the ‘social desirability response bias’ (Robson, 2002, p. 310) that can be a notorious disadvantage of both interviews and questionnaires as there are often discrepancies between what people say and what they actually do. By observing what people are doing it is possible to triangulate findings and results from the previous studies of this project to uncover new information that can illuminate the interview and questionnaire results. This was discussed in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

After a description of the pilot study, the issues that arose from the pilot study are discussed before information about the Children’s Centre and the main study are described in detail.

### 6.1.1 The pilot study

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question:

What, if any, are the specific benefits of parent-child group music-making when compared to two other parent-child activity groups?

In order to answer this question the design was based on video recording what happened during each of the three parent-child activity groups: a music group, an art group, and an outdoor group: full details of these appear later in this chapter (section 6.1.4). Three children from each group were selected, and the film data were then analysed using two different observation methods. Firstly, with a 2-minute random number time-sequence observation schedule (Appendix F), which was designed by incorporating codes based on Fogel's Relational Coding System (RCS) (Fogel, 2000) as used by Piras and Addessi (2008). Frequency counts of 15 main behaviour variables were then carried out so as to investigate the differences, if any, between the children's behaviours across the three groups.

The second method of observation tested in the pilot was to choose a particular time sample, e.g. 5-20 minutes in session and record all events between: child, child-parent, child-peer, child-leader, child-other adult and then to conduct frequency counts of the behaviours observed within the time period and to make free observation with general statements about behaviour. This open observation approach was then trialled with observations of 15 minutes per child with three children per group (Appendix G).

(I) *Finding a suitable method of observation*

The pilot study revealed that the original design method of observation proved effective in measuring the identified behaviours, and that the second unstructured observation method added more detail. Using the 2-minute random number time sequence meant that some behaviours were missed or difficult to count adequately: for example, some of the children's free play activities with peers developed over time and this could not be counted. The other issue was that the schedule was used to observe individual children but could not capture the group as a whole, and this was an important dimension of the activity.

It was concluded as a result of the pilot study, with extensive peer reliability testing of both methods, that the systematic observation schedule would be useful in providing a general overview of behaviours but that event sampling over a longer time period per child would provide an opportunity for a more detailed account of what was actually happening in the sessions to emerge. By comparing the music group with two other existing 'creative' groups devised for the same age/stage children, at the centre it ought to be possible to identify and collect information about the various behaviours that occurred in each of the groups, and then compare these behaviours with qualitative techniques of analysis.

This method preserves the 'real world' nature of this research by not manipulating the activity groups in any way, and uses empirical methods. The groups' intrinsic format is informal: families come when they can and leave when they want. To request that the same children attended every group would go against the whole ethos of the Children's Centre activity programme, which is for families to be given the

freedom to attend their choice of activities. One important factor for the research was to ensure that the children were within the same age/stage range and so these three particular groups were selected.

#### 6.1.2 Further issues arising from the pilot study

##### *(I) Researcher issues*

The unobtrusive, non-participant role of the researcher was difficult to manage at a personal level. Not engaging with the children or the adults other than gaining their consent helped to minimise the impact of researcher bias but felt awkward and contrary to what felt like ‘good practice’ as an early childhood music practitioner. Other professionals attended the sessions from time to time to observe children so this was not an unfamiliar situation for the participants.

The outdoor group was a very difficult situation for video recording, given the equipment available. There was a lot of traffic noise and the weather was windy on some of the filming days, both of which affected the sound quality. The smaller kitchen garden proved the better location in terms of sound and space and the data collected there was used in the main study.

##### *(II) Organisational issues*

A persistent problem was finding an effective channel for communicating information to the families. Several approaches were tried: speaking with the centre manager, sending a letter to all parents as an e-mail attachment to the manager, circulating flyers and posters, speaking to parents at sessions and word of mouth. None seemed to be completely effective as parents still arrived on the day of filming for the main study claiming they knew nothing about it.

The nature of drop-in groups means that not everyone can be guaranteed to stay for the full session. It was therefore harder to maintain participant attendance across the duration of the session which posed a potential difficulty for the 2-minute random number time-sequence observation scheme which was adopted across the 60 minutes, as a child might leave half way through the session. This was overcome by using a time sampling approach in the main study so that a section of the session could be chosen to ensure that all participants were present throughout. The music group was different because it is itself ordered in time: people seemed to arrive on time and leave at the end, perhaps because it was led by someone in an obvious way. All the activities offered for families at the centre are continuous throughout the year so it was not possible to measure pre- or post- exposure to the activities. New families are free to join the groups at any point and attendance is not obligatory unlike in a school setting, so that attendance could not be guaranteed for any participant.

### *(III) Ethical issues*

Gaining voluntary informed consent was problematic in that several of the children were not brought to the sessions by their own parents so consent had to be sought through an intermediary (the carer), relying on them to take the form home and give it to the parent. The main study research filming dates were posted at the venues and regular attendees were notified by the group leaders and a letter which was sent via the centre manager to all potential participating families. Permission to film and informed consent to participate in the research was gained at every session (Appendix B). New people could arrive at any of the sessions as they are designed to be 'drop-in' and so consent had to be negotiated at every session.

#### *(IV) A limitation of observation*

Observing behaviours can reveal what happens, but cannot indicate why something happens. The advantage of using other research methods at different stages of this research project overcomes this limitation to some extent, as results from other studies help to triangulate these findings and give possible reasons for the observed behaviours.

#### 6.1.3 Information about the Children's Centre

The Children's Centre selected for participation in the study is located in a city in East Anglia, UK. The network of centres in the county was developed in three phases over six years. The phased approach, which was part of a national strategy, meant that there were inconsistencies in their operation, and so a restructuring process took place in April 2012. The reorganisation involved the combining of some centres with a move to develop consistency in the offer of services across the county. As a result the setting has a wide and varied catchment, including some rural villages on the edge of the city. In terms of indices of deprivation, the inner city area is ranked 7075<sup>th</sup> out of 32,482 wards across the country<sup>2</sup> with 33.2% of children at the primary school to which the centre is attached eligible for free school meals (from the school Ofsted report, 2011). The rural areas of the catchment have issues of isolation and loneliness that can lead to poor mental well-being for parents at home with young children. An Institute of Health Equity report on Children's Centres (Pordes-Bowers, Strelitz, Allen, and Donkin, 2012) identified that the role of parenting and especially maternal mental well-being was critical to improving outcomes for very young

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<sup>2</sup>accessed 15.4.13

(<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/Info.do?page=census2011onness/profile/neighbourhood-profile.htm>)

children: “Parents from anywhere on the socioeconomic spectrum may need support.” (2012, p.9) It can be argued therefore that deprivation can take many forms, not only in terms of indices of economic deprivation. Children’s Centres are challenged by the need to serve those whom many would consider to be deprived, as well as those for whom indices of deprivation do not measure accurately reflect loneliness and isolation as factors which deprive both them and their children of social and emotional networks. With a limited budget a centre manager often have difficult choices to make about the services they offer.

*(I) The programme of activities*

The centre offers a range of parent-child activities throughout the week including; ‘Outdoor Explorers’, ‘Young Picassos’ and ‘Music Spectacular’ - the three groups chosen as part of this study. In addition there is a range of services for adults and young people, including for example; Midwife and Health Visitor sessions, Smoking Cessation, Young Carers’ group and adult numeracy classes. The following statement from the directory conveys the ethos of the parent-child group activities: “Unless otherwise stated all activities *are FREE at the point of contact*. All you have to do is turn up and join in the fun!” (Summer Term 2012 Centre Directory)

The main programme of parent and child activities is provided at the centre building that is attached to a primary school in the city, and also at satellite locations in rural areas where some group activities are held for those who are living in a village often without easy transport links to the city. The intention is to have access to Children’s Centre services in every local community, and to be informal, friendly and welcoming as the following statement implies:

“Any family no matter where they live can attend. We currently run activities and courses on a wide range of themes, from 14 different venues throughout our reach area. We are open 48 weeks of the year from 8.30am – 5.00pm. So whether it be, help for your child or help for yourself – we are here to help!!”

(Centre Directory information 2012)

The chart below (Fig. 6.1) outlines the structure of the organisation and the number of full-time Children’s Centre practitioners. The multi-professional team includes midwives; health visitors; one-to-one counselling from a local charity; and special educational needs support from a local special school. There is also collaboration with the charity Barnados, the local city council, and the local secondary school.

The music groups that are offered at this centre are organised and provided by members of the family support and outreach team. These practitioners do not have specific music specialisms although the individuals leading the groups have a love of music and some play instruments. They know the families who attend the music group as they may be working with them in other capacities as part of their job role.



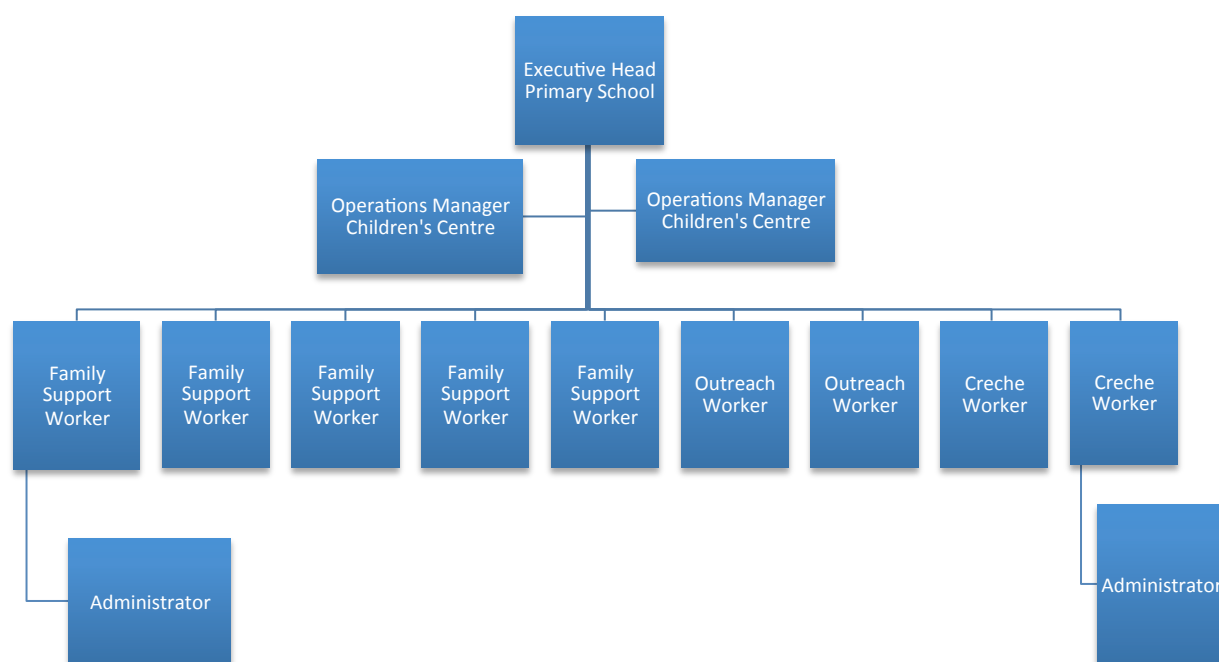


Figure 6.1 Organisational Chart of Children's Centre

#### 6.1.4 The activity groups selected for the study

Two groups were selected to compare with the music activity. Both were parent-child activity groups offered for the same age group of children as the music activity, in the same Children's Centre, and held at the same time of day. All three of the activity groups were well established in the centre programme and had a core group of families who regularly attended. Both art and outdoor activities, like music, stimulate and encourage creative and divergent thinking in young children and therefore could be seen to fulfil aspects of the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage)

**Expressive arts and design** learning area, which includes:

**“Exploring and using media and materials:** children sing songs, make music and dance, and experiment with ways of changing them. They safely use and explore a variety of materials, tools and techniques, experimenting with colour, design, texture, form and function.

**Being imaginative:** children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play and stories.” (DfE, 2012, p. 9)

There now follows a description of each of the three activity groups. Their organisation, the numbers of children that typically attend each group, and how links to home are made possible through each of the three activities:

### *Music Spectacular (Music)*

The session lasted 60 minutes, in a large room (also used for two-year old day-care in the afternoon) with chairs set around a cushioned mat. The format was as follows:

- 20-25 minutes familiar songs with guitar/ukulele accompaniment and use of puppets
- 15-20 minutes break: parents talk together and children play with toys or instruments (if weather is fine the outside space is made available to the families)
- 15-20 minutes circle songs, movement, use of lycra material, and occasionally storytelling (if weather is fine the session continues outside)

Links to home were made by means of the shared repertoire of songs.

Numbers: 10+families.

### *Young Picassos (Art)*

The session lasted 90 minutes. Activity areas were pre-arranged in a village hall to include:

- Playdough
- Painting
- Cutting and sticking
- For the last 10 minutes there was a short 'circle' time. A fruit snack was offered and there was group singing of one song request and a goodbye song

Families arrived and left throughout the session; children were free to choose in which activities to participate. Some families took their artwork home others did not.

Links to home were made by making the playdough and their artwork available to take home.

Numbers: 6-8 families attended each week.

### *Outdoor Explorers* (outdoors)

The session lasted 90 minutes, and the garden area included:

- Sandpit, buckets and spades
- A ball run made of pieces of plastic tubing on stands with a tub at one end to catch the balls and a tub at the other end with water and a bucket
- Garden shed with brushes, both small and large sized
- Garden tools such as trowels, spades and rakes
- Raised beds with vegetables and plants growing
- Seeds/cuttings to be planted
- A 'home corner' with tins and small saucepans, tea pots and wooden spoons
- Push along wheelbarrows and small, plastic ride-on tractors
- Main garden includes: slide, climbing frame, two Wendy houses

Families arrived and left throughout the session, most arriving after the first 20 minutes. The leader planned gardening activities which some of the children joined in with (planting seedlings, cutting back dead heads, digging up vegetables). There was a 'tidy-up' time of about 10 minutes before the end of the session in which all participants helped to put the equipment back in the shed. Links to home were made by making vegetables available to either cook at the centre, or to take home.

Numbers: between 6-15 families

## **6.2 Main Study**

Following the pilot study the main study took place during the autumn term 2012 using the observation methods that had been developed as a result of the pilot study analysis.

### **6.2.1 Children and Parent information**

A total of fifteen children were selected for observation based on age and gender, five for each of the three activities. Most of the children were aged between fifteen months and three years and so children under one and over four years were not

included in the sample. Tables 8.1-8.3 below show the ages and genders of the five children selected for each activity.

Table 6.1 Participant information - Music Spectacular (Music

| Child | Age child     | Gender child | Parent/Carer Age-group | Gender adult |
|-------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| a     | 2y 4m (28mo)  | female       | 16-26                  | f            |
| b     | 2y 2m (26mo)  | male         | 36-46+                 | f            |
| c     | 2y 7m (31mo)  | female       | 16-26                  | f            |
| f     | 19mo          | male         | 16-26                  | f            |
| g     | 2y 6m (30 mo) | female       | 36-46+                 | f            |

| Child | Age child     | Gender child | Parent/Carer Age-group | Gender adult |
|-------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| h     | 2y 6m (30mo)  | female       | 27-35                  | f            |
| i     | 2y 5m (29mo)  | male         | Not known              | f            |
| j     | 2y 1m (25mo)  | female       | 36-46                  | f            |
| g     | 2y 6m (30 mo) | female       | 36-46                  | f            |
| l     | 3y 1m (37mo)  | male         | 36-46                  | f            |

Table 6.2 Participant information -Young Picassos (Art)

| Child | Age child     | Gender child | Parent/Carer Age-group | Gender adult |
|-------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| m     | 17mo          | male         | 36-46+                 | f            |
| n     | 2y 7mo (31mo) | male         | 27-35                  | m            |
| o     | 3y 8mo (44mo) | female       | 36-46+                 | f            |
| p     | 18mo          | female       | 16-26                  | m            |
| q     | 2y 2mo (26mo) | male         | grandparent            | f            |

Table 6.3 Participant information - Outdoor Explorers (Outdoors)

*Parent information –(including childminders and grandparents)*

26% parents/carers 16-26 years

13% parents/carers 27-35 years

46% parents/carers 36-46+ years

6% grandparents      36-46+ years

*Children information*

66% children 2-3 years

20% children 1-2 years

13% children 3-4 years

**mean age: 2y 4m (28months)**

### 6.2.2 Procedure

Non-participant observation was conducted by means of video recording each activity group twice, with two 'flip' cameras on tripods. The main study employed open observation of five children in each activity group for a fifteen-minute period. Descriptive accounts of children's behaviours with their parent, peers, leader, alone and with objects were recorded as they occurred, second-by-second. The text data were then coded by colour according to the behaviour, as new behaviours were encountered in different groups new codes were added.

Every effort was made to keep reactive effects (Webb et al. 1966, p.13) to a minimum this meant that the cameras were positioned at the start and no further attention was given to them during the sessions. This procedure had the strength of a natural setting but the weakness of occasionally missing some data because a child moved out of shot: attempts were made by the researcher to re-position cameras if absolutely necessary, but this had to be done sensitively, without drawing attention to the procedure.

Each group took place in the morning on a weekday - *Music Spectacular*, located at

the main centre building, was filmed on Tuesdays (13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2012).

The room was set up for the music session in one section with chairs in a rough circle and a large mat around which the activity took place. The other end of the room had a 'home corner' with play cooker and other large toys. Spread throughout the room was an assortment of toys and play equipment that were not tidied away before the session. Children were free to interact directly with the music or wander off and play as they wished, and parents tended to participate in the music throughout.

*Young Picassos* was located in a church hall in one of the villages within the catchment area. Filming of the sessions took place on Thursdays (8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012). The hall space was laid out with low tables for the children to stand at to mould playdough; larger tables with chairs for cutting and sticking activities and a floor-based painting activity which was laid out on a plastic sheet on the floor. On both occasions four different activities were offered. There was also a washing bowl and towel located at one end of the room which children could use as and when they wanted. The activities were open-ended although a 'suggestion' was provided for the cutting and sticking option (an example made by the leader in advance). Children were free to move from one activity to the next as they wished and the parents moved with them for the most part, sometimes parents sat and chatted whilst keeping an eye on their children.

*Outdoor Explorers* was filmed on Fridays (9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012) in the garden of the main centre building. The pilot session was located in a smaller, compact 'kitchen garden' area and the main study was located in the much more widespread location of the main garden where a large covered area with slide and

other play equipment dominated the central area. Parts of the main garden were also tiered and there were two Wendy houses. The outdoor space was difficult to film: it was hard to capture a child's flow of movement across the entire available space. The audio recording was compromised by sounds of the wind and traffic noise. It was nonetheless worthwhile to film in this environment as it demonstrated real differences in interaction amongst group members and was a valuable comparison group.

Data were analysed after the session, so that I was a non-participant at each activity, sitting at the side in as unobtrusive a manner as possible. No attempts were made to engage in conversation with any of the participants apart from the leader, at the start and the end of the session, and to gain informed consent from parents. This felt uncomfortable for me, but no one else appeared to mind as visitors to the sessions were quite common: there were early childhood education students attending as part of their training at two of the sessions and a trainee nurse was in attendance at another.

### **6.3 Data collation and analysis**

Film data were analysed using second-by-second observation of a single child for a fifteen-minute period. Where possible the same fifteen-minute period was selected within the activity session. In total 225 minutes of film data were analysed from 15 children. The time period for observation was chosen for each activity once most of the families had arrived, the children were settled and the session was in mid-flight, (usually between 8-10 minutes after the start of the session). The *Music Spectacular* time period was selected at random but the researcher selected the start of a song rather than the middle as a place to begin observing.

### 6.3.1 Data organisation

I wrote a descriptive account of every behaviour and event that was observed of the child and every person or object with whom she/he interacted during the time period. Observations had to be of a type that anyone could observe and record, and no inferential attributions were made (for example; ‘child snuggled happily on carer’s lap’ would not be acceptable whereas ‘child sits on carer’s lap’ could be coded and counted as an observed event). The analysis of data took place in the following random order:

*Music Spectacular*

*Young Picassos*

*Outdoor Explorers*

Coding categories were added to those developed in the pilot study, as they occurred during the analysis of the new data in an iterative fashion. The addition of ‘turn towards’ and ‘point’ was added in the Art group analysis and also occurred in the Outdoor group. Once a new code was identified, the previous group’s data were re-coded to include any counts within the new code. No new codes were added in the Outdoor group analysis process. The texts were then coded thematically using a colour system:

green for **look at**,  
black for **movement**,  
red for **point**,  
orange for **eye contact**,  
yellow for **smile**,  
pale green for **sing**,  
pale blue for **speak**,  
dark blue for **symbolic activity**,  
purple/red for **use of object**,  
brown for **touch**

Some coding categories comprised several sub-codes e.g., ‘**looking at**’ included:

looking at leader, looking at peer, looking at carer, looking at adult, looking at object,



looking at hands (own or others). The analysis process began with precise recording of every detail of interaction or behaviour and once these were recorded in variable categories they were then combined to form an aggregated variable. For example, the various codes within 'look at' were aggregated into either '**look at person**' or '**look at hands**'. It was decided not to include the 'practical touch' code in the aggregated variable dataset (e.g. 'parent does up child's coat', 'child moves hair from face') as these actions could occur at any time, in any place, and were not considered relevant enough to include in the analyses.

This approach generated specific categories for the music group that did not appear in other group sessions or were very infrequent. These were:

- Sing
- On/off parent's lap – sitting on carer's lap only occurred in the music group (or in the short singing session that took place at the end of *Young Picassos*)
- Several codes within 'symbolic activity'

Some actions were ambiguous and decisions had to be made about their categorisation. 'Symbolic actions' were coded in sessions other than music and included: a reciprocated wave between parent and child when not close by each other, and an adult tapping on a wheelbarrow in a rhythmic pattern when interacting with her child.

'**Pointing**' did not fit into the category of 'symbolic action' because it occurred spontaneously. It is a communicative, deictic gesture – conveying *inner* intent and needing reference to a context to be understood (Camaioni et al. 2003, p.5), and so differs completely from the actions that are formalised as part of a song, where there is no obvious reference other than the words and melody of the song. According to

Bates et al. (1975) pointing may be ‘protodeclarative’ or ‘protoimperative’ (Bates, Camaioni, and Volterra, 1975). ‘Protoimperative’ pointing is used to indicate the request for an object, and ‘protodeclarative’ pointing has been interpreted as the child’s attempt to direct an adult’s attention towards something that is of interest to the child. A further study found that by the age of two years children were using pointing to share attention in communication with a partner (Moore and D’Entremont, 2001). A **‘nod’** was coded as part of ‘speak’ as it is a spontaneous behaviour that is communicative.

**‘Use of Object’** – This code included the child’s or parent’s play or other use of any objects throughout the session. It was a slightly problematic coding variable as objects were used in different ways in the three groups. In music, objects were incidental and were chosen by children seemingly as diversions during the course of the activity. They were not integral to performing the main activity of the group session. Sometimes a child or parent would use the object rhythmically or in a gestural manner to enhance the action of the song. In the art activity the use of objects was integral to the function of the group activity, in that painting requires holding and using a paintbrush, modelling playdough requires that the child manipulates the object. Similarly much of the outdoor activity involves the use of objects: buckets and spades for digging in the sand. Nonetheless these differences in the use of objects highlights the specific qualities of music compared to other young children’s play-based activities.

Table 6.4 (below) shows the aggregated variables with the codes that were combined together to form the larger variable.

| <b>Aggregated variable</b> | <b>Codes included in aggregated theme categories</b> |             |                                |                |               |              |               |
|----------------------------|--|-------------|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>Look @ person</b>       | leader   | parent      | peer                           | adult          | other         |              |               |
| <b>Look @ hands</b>        | other's  | own         | parent's symbolic              |                |               |              |               |
| <b>Parent's lap</b>        | on   | off         |                                |                |               |              |               |
| <b>Use of Object</b>       | pick-up, put down holding                            | played with | move symbolically rhythmically | parent move    |               |              |               |
| <b>Point</b>               | child  | parent      |                                |                |               |              |               |
| <b>Symbolic activity</b>   | clap   | lie         | hold hands                     | actions        | jump          | step         | sway          |
| <b>Sing</b>                | child  | parent      | adult                          |                |               |              |               |
| <b>Movement</b>            | stand  | sit         | run                            | walk           | jump          | turn towards | wiggle        |
| <b>Eye Contact</b>         | peer   | parent      | leader                         | adult          |               |              |               |
| <b>Affection touch</b>     | touch parent   | kiss parent | touch child                    | snuggle parent | snuggle child |              |               |
| <b>Speak</b>               | parent   | child       | adult                          | leader         | adult-adult   | adult-child  | nod           |
| <b>Smile</b>               | child  | big sm.ch.  | parent                         | big sm. parent | adult         | leader       | big sm leader |

Table 6.4 Aggregated variables from list of codes

### *Reliability*

An expert observer conducted a reliability test on the data from three children from each activity group over a three-minute period. The coding schedule (comprised of the aggregated theme categories) and a description were supplied, and the observer selected the section of film to code randomly. The observer's codings were in agreement with the researcher's coding of the same period for 85-90% of the categories. Where differences were found these were discussed with the researcher for clarification and final agreement.

### 6.3.2 Qualitative Analysis

The coding themes were generated through an iterative process of behavioural observation, and the interpretation of the different behaviours was carried out in relation to several theoretical models including Fogel's 'Relational Coding system' (2000), the coding procedures used to measure transitions to symbolic communication in the second year of life (Camaioni et al., 2003, p. 5), Vygotsky's (1978) notion of 'zones of proximal development' (zpd), Rogoff's orienting concepts for understanding cultural processes (Rogoff, 2003, pp. 10-11) and expectation theory in music (Huron, 2006; Meyer, 1956).

Figure 6.2 below shows the cyclical process, with the descriptive accounts of the fifteen-minute period for each child providing a starting point for reflection.

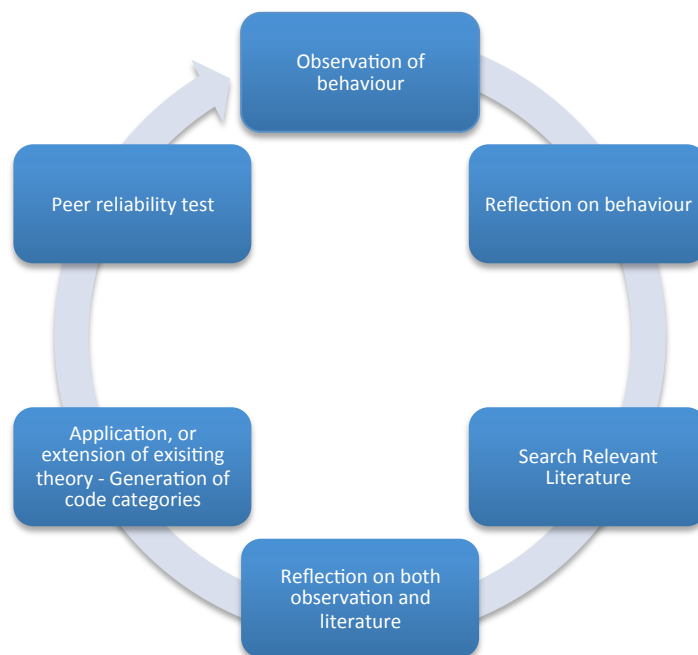


Figure 6.2 Qualitative code/theory-generation cycle

(based on Schön (1983) and Kolb (1984)'s notions of experiential learning)

As well as leading to coding categorisation and the definition of communicative and interactive actions, these reflections also gave rise to some overarching thoughts and ideas about the social, cultural, educational and emotional frames that were present in the groups, and these contributed to the theoretical interpretation of some of the results which are discussed in the next section.

## **6.4 Findings**

### **6.4.1 The role of 'leader'**

The open qualitative observation of entire group sessions revealed a distinct difference between the leading style of the music group practitioner and the other two groups' leaders. In *Music Spectacular* the group was 'practitioner-led', although the children were free to not participate and move around the room as they wished (there was no compulsion to keep a child sitting still in the circle). Parents co-participated with their children, and the song repertoire was well known by most of the adults and children, who sang with the leader and demonstrated the actions to the songs. Speech between participants was minimal as the musical environment precluded it. Interactions were, in one sense, directed and led by the musical material. The practitioner clearly knew the families well and used the children's names frequently throughout the session. The leading style was directive, yet informal.

In comparison, the leader of *Young Picassos* and *Outdoor Explorers* engaged individual children and parents in conversations whilst pre-occupied with the activities, often leading to open-ended questions with the children. The activities were prepared and planned in advance, often based on a seasonal theme. It was clear that children's learning outcomes had been thought about. The sessions were not

practitioner-directed, yet there was direction in the planning. The final section of the art session included a practitioner-directed circle time with a snack time, song request and goodbye song led by the practitioner. It appeared that the emphasis of the session was on the 'process' of using art materials and not on 'product'. Parents did not participate in the art activities but sat with their children as they did so. They were not co-participants in the same way as the 'led' music session. The leading style of the session was facilitative and unobtrusive.

In *Outdoor Explorers* the leader modelled the behaviour of adult participation and some parents joined in with the children and helped with digging or making sandcastles, but this was not the same as the co-participation of the music session where everyone was doing the same thing at the same time together.

#### 6.4.2 Cultural learning

##### *(I) Symbolic/purposeful activity in music groups*

Repeated observations of the data and literature searches based on behaviours led to the emergence of the code 'symbolic activity' to describe the representational gestures that were used mostly in the music sessions. Eckerdal and Merker (2009, p. 250) refer to these as "schematized sequences of obligatory bodily action" which are combined with melody and words into a narrative sequence allowing predictable participation of both infant and parent in interaction (Trevvarthen, 1979; Trevvarthen and Malloch, 2000). These specific referents whose meaning did not change were used as communicative acts in songs. They included actions such as; clapping, lie down, jumping, moving side-to-side, holding hands, lifted-up/bounced rhythmically, specific actions to song with hands. All these activities occurred as part of a song and the children and their parents performed them at particular moments within the song,

in a sense ritually ‘acting-out’ the narrative of the song lyrics. For example:

(**lie down**) “See the little bunnies sleeping till it's nearly noon  
Come and let us wake them with a merry tune  
They’re so still, are they ill? (**pause and ‘sssh’**)  
Wake up little bunnies! (**stand up**)  
**(jump up and down)**  
Hop little bunnies, hop, hop, hop! Hop little bunnies, hop, hop, hop!  
Hop little bunnies, hop, hop, hop!

This ritual element could take place because of the music – it provided the frame and created a special, perhaps ‘liminal’ environment (Turner, 1982), in which ‘performance’ was accepted and enjoyed. Eckerdal and Merker argue that action songs are the child’s first introduction to active participation in human ritual. The non-verbal communicative competence shared by parent, child, leader and the group is a means of participation. This ritual culture comprises formal structure, actual teaching and the need for imitative fidelity (Eckerdal and Merker, 2009, p. 251). The ‘symbolic actions’ were not spontaneous, nor inspired by the child’s independent thought: they were pre-determined perhaps by the music leader or as part of tradition-cultural knowledge (e.g., ‘Twinkle, twinkle’- wiggle fingers for the opening line). By joining in with the symbolic action the leader, parent and child demonstrate a shared knowledge, meaning and understanding of the cultural tradition of that song, in that place and time. Wenger (1998) would describe this as the development of a ‘community of practice’ in which mutual engagement, shared repertoire and joint enterprise enable a shared understanding of what it is to ‘be’, in this case, a music group in this Children’s Centre.

## *(II) The use of objects*

In the music group activity objects were held, picked up and put down most frequently: they were not ‘played with’ in an obvious fashion as frequently as in the other groups. One child held a teddy for a large part of the time period of the observation but she neither looked at, nor played with it, for much of the time. The teddy must have served a purpose as she made efforts to transfer it from hand to hand at times rather than put it down but it was not clear what that purpose was other than comfort perhaps. Objects were used for *musical play* in the music group (i.e., moved rhythmically or bounced up and down to a song).

Objects were used for play in both art and the outdoors activities. Gaining experience in the use of objects, particularly when there is an adult guide present to focus the children’s attention and encourage collaborative engagement with objects can lead to opportunities for successful improvements in children’s performance in using these tools, especially if the adult guides the child sensitively at the limit of their developmental ability (in the ‘zone of proximal development’) – Rogoff (1991), pp.158-159.

### 6.4.3 Social Learning

#### *(I) Music group*

Being part of the group music-making gave children opportunities to assess and rehearse social rules and conventions. The often simple repetitive structure of many of the songs used in early childhood are useful in offering young children chances to experiment with language (Goswami and Bryant, 1990), to learn to express themselves in a group, and to build their confidence (Hallam, 2010). Watching others and their parent’s modelling provides a positive reinforcement of their own



behaviour (Tomasello and Kirschner, 2010). Conventions of turn-taking, so vital for the use of language in communication, can be practised in an enjoyable way.

As part of the qualitative analysis the ‘musical-social-learning model’ was developed to describe the process of what was being observed through group participation of a known song (this is described in more detail in section 8.5 below). What seemed to matter was that the song material was familiar to the child. Rogoff (2003, pp.28-29) suggests that people are always functioning in a socio-cultural context and knowing the conventions of the music group community enabled the children’s participation from the *Insiders’ Position*. From this position Rogoff suggests that the ‘customs’ of the community are known and adhered to, in the case of the music group this could include the actions of the songs and that the group participates in a certain way. Children and adults were observed singing in equal measure, demonstrating their knowledge of the song repertoire.

Those who were new were unable to participate in the same way as the other children. Their role was more observational and non-participatory, sometimes frowning and looking intently at the leader and the rest of the group members, clearly representing the *Outsiders’ Position* (Rogoff, 2003 pp.26-27). They were not ‘a part’ of the activity, but were ‘looking in on the activity’, as Young (2003a) found in her observations of group music making in a nursery setting. Knowing the song or material seems to be intrinsic to being able to participate. Adults can join in and pick up the actions and tune as the activity progresses, but the young child stands on the edge watching. When newcomers were encouraged to join in by their parent before feeling able to, they protested and refused.

## *(II) Outdoor group*

Small groups of children and perhaps one or two adults formed informal groups in the outdoor activity around the sandpit, for example. The outdoor activity provoked more speaking overall than either of the other groups. It was a sociable activity in which all adults spoke to all children and all children spoke to all adults freely, and the group had a cohesive atmosphere, perhaps because of these group participants, or perhaps because of being outside for the activity. There was not, however, the group symmetry of interaction that occurred in the music activity: the interactions were spontaneous and informal.

The leader permitted other adults to take the lead and model behaviour to the children: the 'teacher role' was shared. The social aspect of the outdoor group was informal and collective: learning seemed to take place between adults and children, and between peers in informal groupings. Some children were better able to interact in these groups than others, depending on their stage of development, and some children played alone.

## *(III) Art group*

The parent role in the art group was less co-participatory and more like an 'expert' companion, guiding and supporting children's creative expressions but not participating themselves: adults did not make an artwork, but guided their children's creations. Rogoff talks of adults taking responsibility for the management and segmentation of the problem-solving effort:

"In engaging children in an appropriate handling of a task, adults create supported situations in which children can extend current skills and

knowledge to a higher level of competence.” (Rogoff, 2003, p.93)

Child and parent spoke together most in the art group and made use of pointing gestures in guiding the process of participation in the activity. Although children looked at the actions of their peers there was not as much talk between peers as there was in the outdoor activities: adults talked together most in this group. The social dimension was less unified between adults and children in this group.

Learning in the art and the outdoor groups seemed to depend more strongly on peer-to-peer observation to gain information, whereas the music group relied on looking at the leader and watching their parent’s hands for guidance. The subtle differences between the social learning contexts of the groups is perhaps best demonstrated by the different ways that the children accessed information in order to participate.

#### 6.4.4 Music group - Group symmetry

What became evident in the early stages of this study, during the initial analysis of the pilot study data was a distinct difference between the ‘whole group behaviour’ in music and the other two groups. What characterised the music group was everyone shared the same interactive ‘moment’ in time. For example when the leader picked up his flute to start to play ‘Twinkle, twinkle, little star’ every eye was on him and attention was focused on listening, singing and wiggling fingers. There was a shared symmetry of interaction/attention within the group members. Fogel (2000) defined ‘symmetry’ in infant-parent dyad interaction as a mutual engagement between partners when participating in the communicative process. I would like to suggest that in a group music activity ‘group symmetry’ occurs when there is mutual

engagement amongst group members in a shared musical event. It is communicative in its nature as the familiar songs communicate information about culture, the melody communicates information about the musical traditions, and the symbolic actions narrate the meaning of the words that assists with their understanding. The shared affect that is experienced as part of the group symmetry may help in feelings of belonging and positive emotion. This ‘group symmetry’ appears to be dependent on the practitioner-led approach to the activity, and may contribute to children’s emotional learning: this is discussed in more detail in the following section.

#### 6.4.5 Emotional Learning

##### *(I) Music*

The use of the parent’s lap by children occurred only in the music group activity. Children could be bounced or lifted and this seemed to lead to shared enjoyment between parent and child. The close proximity also led, with these participants, to more demonstrations of affection in the music group as compared to the other two groups. Smiling and laughter occurred more frequently in music than in the other two groups. Informal observation suggests that the smiles and laughter often occurred at the end of songs, where there had been movement – jumping or lifting up, and/or where songs had a rubato and rallentando over a dominant chord that built up a feeling of suspense with a resolution to the tonic and a release of tension, after which laughter or smiles seemed to occur. Huron (2006, p. 27) speaks about laughter as being a social response and mostly is not a response to humour but a dissipation of social fears. What Huron describes as ‘feelings of anticipation’ (Huron, 2007, p.306) can be built up for Western-enculturated listeners by including the feeling that a chromatic tone should resolve to a diatonic neighbour. In the example below (Fig.

6.3), this prediction response is put in tension with the use of *ritardando* in the penultimate two bars, making it less clear when the resolution will come. This builds tension so that when the expected happens (with the closing cadence) there is a release. Both tension and surprise are capable of evoking physiological stress. It is interesting that Huron talks about Western enculturation being a pre-requisite to experiencing the feelings of anticipation built around the dominant chord resolving to the tonic. Could it be that early childhood song experiences in music groups such as this are contributing to the enculturation process and helping to develop feelings of anticipation?

This could form the basis of a further research study investigating the interplay of tempo and harmonic structure in nursery rhymes on emotional responses in young children and their parents in a group music-making situation.

## Tiny Turtle

The musical score for 'Tiny Turtle' is written in 4/4 time. It features a voice part and a vocal part (Vo.). The lyrics are: 'I have a ti - ny tur - tle whose name is ti - ny tim I put him in the bath tub to see if he could swim He drank up all the wa - ter he ate up all the soap and then he went to bed with a bu - bble in his throat bub - ble bub - ble Bub - ble POP!' The chords are: C, D, G, G7, C, G, G7, C, G7, C. The tempo is marked 'rall.' (rallentando) for the last three bars.

Voice

I have a ti - ny tur - tle whose name is ti - ny tim I

Vo.

put him in the bath tub to see if he could swim He

drank up all the wa - ter he ate up all the soap and then he went to bed with a

bu - bble in his throat bub - ble bub - ble Bub - ble POP!

**rall.**

Figure 6.3 Song example with cadence resolution and build up of tension in last three bars

### 6.4.6 Pointing

Pointing was an uncommon behaviour in the music activity: the nature of the group activity was leader-focused, so the group attention was on following a lead rather than making one's own choices. Perhaps following a lead does not encourage expression of inner intent as a participant but rather 'joining' another's inner intentions. The art activity involved both parent and child pointing equally, and in the outdoors group the child pointed much more than the parent did. Perhaps this relates to the outdoor group focus being on peer-to-peer interaction and pointing supports communicative exchanges, helping the child to give meaning to his/her inner

intentions. The use of pointing is an indication of the difference between the groups: the outdoor, child-initiated play required communication of intent in peer-to-peer interactions. The art group relied on the parent guiding the experimentation of the child, with evidence of equal pointing behaviours, whereas the music group relied on the leader's direction so that neither parent nor child needed to point. These results may be a starting point for further investigation into young children's divergent thinking and the use of pointing in free-flow play when compared to adult-directed activity

6.5 Musical-Social-Learning Model

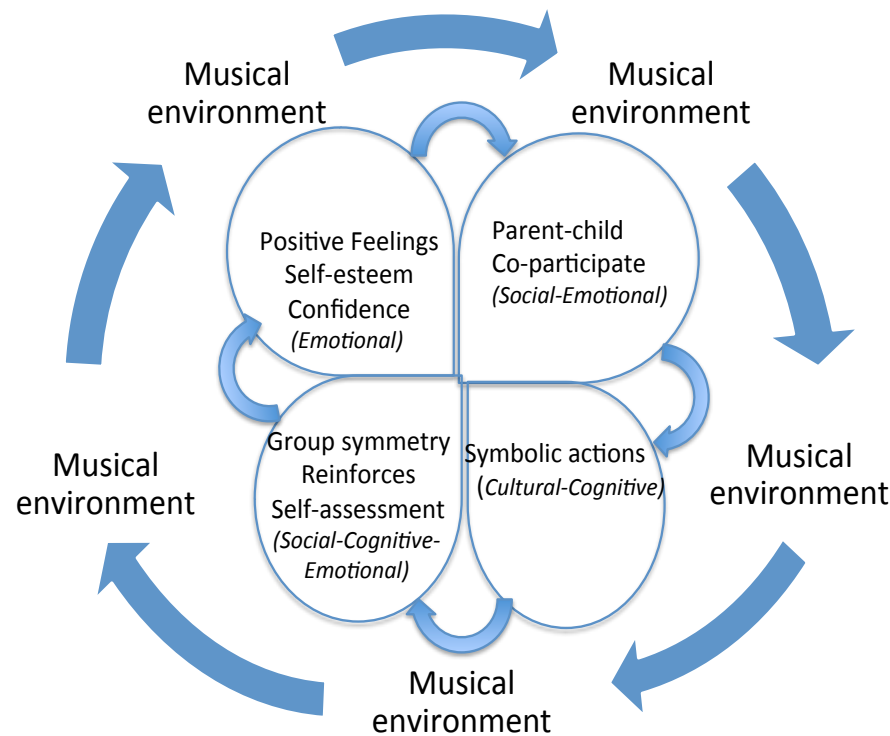


Figure 6.4 Musical-Social-Learning Model

S-E-C-C (Social-Emotional-Cultural-Cognitive)

The Musical-Social-Learning Model (see Fig. 6.4 above) is proposed as a result of this research, by applying the socio-cultural theoretical framework for the findings. It suggests that music is an inescapable environment that contains, supports and encourages the four other aspects of the group activity that simultaneously influence one another. The inescapable quality of the musical environment (if you are in present in the room you cannot escape the music) is shown by the encircling arrows at the outer edge of the diagram. The inner figure is of the different elements that were observed as part of the group music making activity. They are interconnected and influence one another: parent and child co-participate in the music by means of shared symbolic/purposeful actions that help to interpret cultural norms of understanding and meaning. The group symmetry of interaction helps reinforce children's self-assessment, combined with a shared positive affect experience, which helps to increase positive feelings, promoting self-esteem and confidence.

Each piece in the central figure activates a domain or domains of development and learning: Social, Emotional, Cultural and Cognitive (S-E-C-C).

The 'Parent and child co-participation' is both social and emotional. The one-to-one interaction time benefits both parent and child in bonding together. The 'Symbolic actions' require memory skills to get the actions of the song in the right place at the right time and to sing the song simultaneously - these are both cognitive functions. It is also a cultural interchange, the songs are usually in a Western tonality, and may convey subtle messages about cultural norms and expectations. The 'Group symmetry' of interaction – sharing the same song at the same time – creates an emotional response whereas the self-assessment - checking out one's actions against the rest of the group – is essentially a cognitive one. The group sense of



‘communitas,’ being together and participating in the song, is social. The final part of the figure represents emotional responses: the ‘Positive feelings, self-esteem and confidence’ which result from the experience, which may feed a desire to repeat the experience, thereby building skills and knowledge through the process.

These interconnected elements seem to be part of a social-cultural learning model with emotional aspects, and in particular, this reveals the way in which the group dynamic of shared moments in time lead to shared emotions in time which can construct feelings of belonging and self-esteem. The music acts as a lubricant for this model to be in motion: it is the essential ingredient, and without it the various aspects would not function as a whole.

The musical social learning setting that is created by the parent-child music making group in the Children’s Centre allows for all participants (adult and child) to perform together, and the resultant group activity is greater than the sum of its parts.

Vygotsky suggested that learning and development are social (joint, interpersonal, collective), with people building ‘zones’ – the spaces between who they are and who they are becoming, at one and the same time *both being and becoming* (Holzman, 2009). Vygotsky suggested that the essence of human growth is that children learn and develop by “performing a head taller than they are” (Vygotsky 1968, p. 102). This appears to be the case in the parent-child group music making situation, in which self-assessment seemed to be part of the process of *becoming* through ‘performing’ the symbolic actions with others.

## **6.6 Concluding remarks**

The aim of this phase of the research was to identify what, if any, were the specific benefits of the music compared to art and outdoor activity groups for both children and parents. The study allowed the children's 'voice' to be heard in the research by describing the various behaviours in the three activity groups and then relating this to development across the domains of: social, emotional and cultural learning. By comparing music with other activities it was possible to identify specific qualities of music group activity that might not have been apparent if comparisons had been made between different music groups rather than different sorts of activities, as in this study.

The findings from the study have highlighted that the music activity stood out for a number of reasons, a major factor being the teacher-led approach. This must be seen as a limitation on the comparative aspect of the study, but it is also a clear finding. The music leader was a member of the Children's Centre practitioner team and indeed set up the art group in its child-led manner, and yet for him, and perhaps for the centre participants, music in early childhood works best in a practitioner-led style. Because of this approach, several results ensued; there was shared symmetry of interaction in the group that seemed to have a positive impact on the group members. Children spent more time on the parent's lap and thus the music group provided more opportunities for affectionate touch: this has positive benefits for emotional development and feelings of secure attachment. However, it was less easy for the child to direct the interaction or take the expert role.

Children co-participated with their parents, following the modelling of singing and symbolic/purposeful actions that characterise the music group activity. This in turn led to increases in positive feelings (as evidenced by the smiling and laughter). Self-esteem and confidence may be built as the child assesses her own performance against that of the rest of the group. It was found that the music group provided an inescapable environment - if you are in the room you cannot avoid it, and this allowed for children to build on learning from previous attendance. The repetition of known material enabled rehearsal and practice of symbolic actions and singing, and this helped in the child's overall development and may contribute to 'readiness for school' outcomes.

There was a ritualistic/performance element present in the music group which gave permission for 'performances': children were able to dance in front of the group in dressing-up clothes, expressing individuality and creativity within a framework of musical material. The particular atmosphere that allowed for the 'performance' element may indicate that the group creates a 'liminal' space as defined by Van Gennep (1960) as "a gap between the ordered worlds where almost anything can happen." The word 'liminal' is derived from the Latin for 'threshold'. Turner (1974, 1982, 2009) developed this as a crucial component of his conception of 'liminality' in performance. He views real or symbolic thresholds as important components of ritual and symbolic experiences, as participants are in an ambiguous situation at a midpoint between status sequences. What is helpful about the music group situation is that children's free expressions are contained by the musical structure and therefore sustained. There seemed to be a flow of feelings of belonging and community because everyone was part of the experience at the same time with a

shared affect and positive emotional state.

Findings related to the comparison groups included more use of objects and pointing than the music group activity. The parent role in the art group contrasted with the music group as it was not one of co-participation: parents did not paint or mould themselves, and so their role was more concerned with guiding and leading the play of their children. This meant that there was more pointing, as they indicated options to their children of possible colours to paint with. The only time there was a sense of group symmetry of interaction was during the short teacher-led snack and song time, particularly when everyone sang goodbye to each child. The parent supported and structured the novice's efforts, learning as an apprentice, transferring responsibility for handling skills to the novice (Rogoff, 1991). This is dependent on the novice's desire for more responsibility: some children played independently of their parent whilst others stayed very close and sought constant reassurance and guidance of their actions.

The outdoor activity revealed more speaking between all these participants, and watching the actions of peers and using objects for play were also more prevalent. Children and adults engaged in informal, social learning situations as the children played in the outdoors, developing skills and knowledge of objects and movement in the garden space. Children chose what they wanted to do minute-by-minute so that there was a frequent turning towards different objects or people. Parents interpreted and adjusted their behaviour to meet the 'cycle of attention' of the child. The adult adjustment is in itself a form of socialisation, constructing an organised, social world together, teaching the child how to punctuate the flow of experience (Kaye, 1977).

This comparison study made it possible to observe that in both the art and the outdoor group there was less opportunity for children to build in any obvious ways on their learning from a previous sessions. The repetition of songs in the music activity involved detailed actions and memory of words and tune in order – children in the other groups followed their momentary interests with no need to be persistent or to persevere in their attempts to get things correct, yet this was something the children seemed to enjoy in the music group activity.

The discussion chapter that follows this will expand and develop these findings in relation to the results and findings from the other two phases of this research project: it will also discuss the musical-social-learning model that is proposed in this chapter in relation to the theoretical framework of this thesis.

## Chapter 7

### General Discussion and Implications

*“ We attach supreme importance to a musical education, because rhythm and harmony sink most deeply into the recesses of the soul and take most powerful hold of it, bringing gracefulness [health and well-being] in their train.” Plato*

(paraphrased from translations of *The Republic*, book III, by J.L. Davies, D. J. Vaughan, and B. Jowett in Rainbow, 1989)

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings and results from the entire research project and comes to some conclusions and implications for policy, practice and future research. The socio-cultural theoretical framework will help to bring the results and findings together in this discussion to make some comments about music education in early childhood.

One of the guiding aims of this project was to establish a rationale for music groups for parents and young children in the Children’s Centre setting. This was achieved by means of a qualitative interview study with a sample of parents and professionals. These preliminary findings were then investigated by means of a quantitative questionnaire study. Data from parents and practitioner groups were compared to ascertain any potential differences in perceptions between and within the two groups. The final study was based on observed behaviours in a parent-child music group, and compared these behaviours with those exhibited in an art and an outdoor group in a Children’s Centre setting to investigate what if any were the specific benefits of music compared to other activities offered for parents and children at a Children’s

Centre. These methods were chosen to provide a rich and rigorous view of an unexplored topic by combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analyses some internal triangulation was possible: all of the results and findings will be integrated within a common theoretical framework in this general discussion chapter

Why is this research area important? Music in Children's Centres is not what many may consider to be formal music education, and yet the findings and results from this study appear to show that Plato's notion (in the quotation above) of music education affecting the soul and thereby causing 'gracefulness [health and well-being]' may be an apt definition of 'music education' in this context. The benefits of music to positive emotions were perceived to be of high importance by parents and Children's Centre practitioners in the interview and the questionnaire studies. The observation study findings suggest that group music making may contribute to positive feelings and enjoyment.

Perceptions and attitudes are exposed from a range of perspectives to reveal a rationale for parent-child music groups in Children's Centres. The observation study allowed for the behaviours of the young children to be foregrounded and this, in a sense, provided their 'voice' in the research study. Few prior studies have explored this topic, especially from the point of view of Children's Centre practitioners.

The unexpected positive skew to the questionnaire study results meant that any significant differences between groups had to be considered within the generally positive framework in which they were found.

The observation study compared music groups with two other activities which broadly encouraged expressive and creative thinking, and all three encouraged parent-child interaction. The major difference was that the music group was organised with a practitioner-led approach and the other two were more child-led in approach. This had to be accounted for in consideration of the findings. The Musical-Social-Learning model (Fig. 6.4, p.306) that was proposed in the observation study will be discussed in relation to the findings from phases one and two to suggest a theoretical model for conceptualising parent-child group music making in the Children's Centre context. The discussion will be framed around some of the topics of the literature review (Chapter 2): Children's Centres; social, cultural, emotional domains of learning and development.

## **7.2 Children's Centres**

This research was original in that it sought to gather the perspectives about music groups from practitioners from inter-professional teams in Children's Centres as well as parents in order to understand the motivations behind including music in programmes of activities for families from multiple worldviews and perspectives. Interview questions also covered the positive and negative aspects of practitioners' work and this provided some insight into the personal motivations for practice. This section starts with findings that relate to working in a Children's Centre and then



moves to discuss practitioners' perceptions of why music is included in Children's Centre programmes of parent-child activities.

#### 7.2.1 Working in a Children's Centre

These findings relate principally to the interview study data (phase 1) that explored the emerging themes for the questionnaire study (phase 2) and provided some background information about participants. These findings relate to a particular sample of 16 practitioners and any generalisations must be tempered by this fact.

Deriving emotional satisfaction was overwhelmingly seen as the most positive aspect of practitioners' work: the feeling that they were making a difference for families, and even the managers found this aspect the most important. Although emotional challenges featured when asked about the negative aspects of their job, it would seem that these negative aspects were outweighed by the satisfaction of feeling that they were making a difference in people's lives.

One participant voiced a sense of detachment through her professional role, although living in the community in which she worked she could observe, reflect on and understand the community from a detached position. Wenger (1998, p.145) suggests that our identity is constructed through a process of negotiating meanings from our experiences of membership in social communities: various forms of membership have to be reconciled into one identity. Perhaps the practitioner had to reconcile her

professional role with that of being neighbour and friend to some of the families with whom she works, constantly working on negotiating the self in the process. This could be interpreted as social-cultural change occurring in a person's life and as a result perhaps also for her community.

One interview study participant alluded to the issue of reducing the provision of 'universal' groups and focusing on 'targeted' groups for families in particular 'need'. She found it difficult to decide who was 'needy' and believed that universal groups should be maintained, as 'need' is difficult to define. The recent census of Children's Centres (4Children, 2013) recommended that centres should maintain their universal provision:

"It is very important that Children's Centres remain a universal service, as this is the most effective way of reaching disadvantaged families. Any move towards exclusive targeted provision, including by closing Centres in less deprived areas, would seriously undermine the "holistic" approach currently being taken. Children's Centres could develop an unhelpful reputation as a provider of services focused specifically on "failing" families, which would hinder their ability to reach those who need them most. It is important to remember that one in three of the most disadvantaged children live in areas that are considered relatively affluent as a whole" (4Children, 2013, p.8).

The interview study data suggests that inclusivity and accessibility of group activities are important aspects of the Children's Centre remit to practitioners, so that to stigmatise activities as being for 'failing' families seems to be the antithesis of the

prevailing ethos from the perspective of the practitioners in this interview sample. The practitioner's view that defining who is 'needy' is difficult seems to be supported by the Children's Centre census above, which found that disadvantage may be located in affluent areas as well as those considered to be deprived.

### 7.2.2 Professional knowledge and expertise

What became clear during the interview study was that most practitioners were aware of the benefits of music to other areas of learning and development for children in early childhood. Participants told me how music helped all areas of the EYFS curriculum (DfE, 2012), and how it was helpful in mother-baby bonding and early communication. These non-musicians had background knowledge of how music helped children develop. This knowledge, however, may not equip a practitioner in appropriate pedagogical approaches to leading musical activities. The questionnaire study found that over half of the Children's Centre practitioners in the sample and over 10% of the managers agreed to leading musical activities in their settings. This was an unexpected result that appears to show that music is something many practitioners have incorporated into their working practice.

Anning et al. (2006) in their study of multi-professional team working found that a number of themes emerged during discussions about 'what I know' and 'what I am able to do' (pp.85-86). They found that multi-professional teamwork enabled opportunities for professional knowledge and expertise to be distributed amongst team members and that the socio-cultural history of individuals and the organisation

were carried in the team and had to change as the nature of the team and of the work fluctuated. It would appear that the Children's Centre participants in my study are including music practice within the job roles of Children's Centre practitioners and managers. 'What I am able to do', for many practitioners, clearly includes leading musical activities for families.

Osgood et al.'s (2013) study of Youth Music projects engaging hard to reach families (reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis) indicated that familiar practitioners and a familiar location were preferred for musical activities by those who participated in their study. The parachuting-in of specialist artists may engage certain families and perhaps alienate others. Working in Children's Centres in music perhaps requires a long lead-in time to allow the musician to become familiar.

This poses a question about the role of 'expert' early childhood music teachers in the early years sector. Should it involve guiding practitioners in their music practice or teaching music with parents and children? What might be deemed necessary skills and knowledge appropriate for the leading of musical activities? Perhaps knowledge of early childhood development and education might be considered to be as important as musical knowledge. Knowing the community and building relationships over time with families might be more important to the group music activity than having a wide repertoire and expert musical skills.

The current qualification routes into family support work (such as, childcare, social work, social care, youth work, education) may not include sufficient musical training to meet a required standard. At the time of writing there is no required standard, nor a required qualification to teach early childhood music, so this is a moot point. On the other hand training musicians to work in early childhood does not have a clear pathway, and there are no required standards. Notions of 'expert' seem to be debatable on both sides. However if Anning et al.'s (2006) research found that there was a place for distinct specialisms within multi-professional teams surely there is a case for a professional role within Children's Centre teams for music-arts specialism? There might be an argument for the musical social pedagogue who works with arts-based initiatives with families including music, in offering support and education in its broadest sense to families as seen in Lefevre's (2004) research, which was reviewed in Chapter two of this thesis.

### 7.2.3 Why is music included in Children's Centres?

The questionnaire study results revealed that practitioners' and parents' attitudes from this wider sample were very positive about the benefits of music (although these participants may have chosen to participate in the questionnaire because of their positive views about music). When asked why music is offered in Children's Centres the most important reason given by practitioners was the benefit of music to children's overall learning, with social and emotional benefits in second and third place respectively.

Results from the parent sample from the questionnaire study showed that their most important reason for attending the music group was that it made their child happy. This positive emotional benefit was followed by the social and then the learning benefits of music. In the interview study the social benefits for children had appeared more important to the parent group, but the questionnaire study results prioritised the emotional theme. Interestingly, the practitioners in the questionnaire sample, in spite of selecting the learning benefits of music as most important perceived that parents brought their children because of the positive emotional benefits that they received.

The rationale for music group activity in Children's Centres based on the diverse perspectives of parents and practitioners from both the interview study (phase 1) and the questionnaire study (phase 2) would appear to indicate that both groups found the same items the most important, but were ranked differently. For the parent group the emotional benefits for their children were most important with socialisation and learning benefits following respectively and for the practitioners the learning and developmental benefits of music were the most important reason with social and emotional following respectively. These themes will be discussed further in the following sections.

### 7.3 Social Learning

Parent-child group music was identified by both parents and practitioners as beneficial to children's socialisation. The next section outlines the ways in which the music activities of this research study were found to assist with social development

and learning.

7.3.1 The ‘zone of proximal development’ in the music activity group

Vygotsky’s (1978) ‘zone of proximal development’ (p.86) was described as a model to frame this study. The theory is based on the assumption that collaboration with others especially if they are more capable, can enable a child to perform more complex problem solving tasks. Vygotsky also suggests that through imitation, children can go well beyond the limit of their capabilities in collective activities under guidance (p.88).

The parent-child music group activity seemed to illustrate this theory in the use of the participatory action song. Findings from the observation study suggest that parent-child dyads, together with others, sang songs with actions: children could watch their parent’s hands as they performed the actions, then join in with singing and the actions for themselves in their own time, following their adult guide. They also assessed their performance against others in the group and this seemed to encourage their participation. The actions and the singing seemed to enhance one another: the physical action perhaps reinforced the learning of the words of the song.

In the interview study - phase one - the parent participants found the social aspects of attending the music group the most helpful. One parent (data item, p.166) stated that in the music group the children interacted together more and that copying helped them integrate. She had observed the opportunity for children to assess themselves against their peers and perhaps the ‘integration’ she spoke of is indicative of the child’s ‘zone of proximal development’, performing in a group something they could

not attempt alone.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis I quoted Vygotsky's (1978, p.57) argument that children's cultural development appears on two levels, firstly interpsychologically (between people) and then intrapsychologically (inside the child). The group activity in early childhood would seem to be very helpful for young children's social and cultural development as it offers an environment for the interpsychological level of function which in turn may give rise to intrapsychological development.

### 7.3.2 Observing the roles and participation of parents in activities

An unexpected finding from the interview study (phase1), confirmed by the results in the questionnaire study (phase 2), and augmented by the findings in the observation study, concerned the role of the parent. In the interview study the theme was coded as 'observing role'. Parent participants spoke about enjoying watching their children (p.180) with others, taking a step back and relaxing (data item, p.181). The questionnaire study results supported this item with over half of the sample of 91 parents selecting '10' (very important) for the observing role item in the reasons why music is included in centre programmes.

The observation study findings suggested that the role of the parent differed in the music group activity as compared to the art and the outdoor activities. Perhaps because the session was led by a practitioner the parents participated in the session alongside their children as co-participants. Because of this the children were guided in the 'ritual' elements of the action songs as part of a cohesive group in which



everyone did the same activity at the same time. In the art activity, for example, the parents did not make an artwork alongside their child: in some cases they guided their children's use of objects and materials to assist their child's participation, whilst in other cases they let their children be guided by their peers and spoke together. Their role was not observing, but was one of guiding and directing. In the outdoor activity the adults seemed to share the 'teacher' role, with informal direction of small groups of children, for example in the sandpit one adult took the lead in building sandcastles, and then another guided the sweeping activity.

Rogoff (1991) talks about children being involved with multiple companions and caregivers in "organised, flexible webs of relationships that focus on shared cultural activities." (p.97) She goes on to suggest that these social relationships provide children with the chance to develop diverse roles, using adults to assist them in achieving their own goals. In the outdoor activity in particular in my study children appeared to be free to manage their own learning, sometimes playing alone and other times engaging a suitable adult with the use of speech in the process.

The music activity allowed the parents and the children to assess the children's current skill level and their needs for guidance by their participation in the action songs. It was clear when they were not singing or not doing the actions 'correctly'. The children and parents were therefore able to adjust the pace of instruction and guidance in the support offered (Rogoff, 1991, pp.106-107).

Levels of participation in all three of the activity groups seemed to be managed and coordinated by eye contact, smiles and laughter as suggested by Rogoff (1991,

p.107). In the music activity the children's and adults' smiles and laughter were acknowledged by the music leader and the songs were then repeated, so that the format of the sessions were guided by these levels of participation. Children indicated their disengagement with activities by physically turning away from them: this was observed in all three of the activity groups.

### 7.3.3 Music is inclusive and inescapable

Results from the questionnaire study suggested that the inclusive nature of music activity was perceived as beneficial by the practitioner group. This inclusive aspect may provide a useful environment for children's development: younger/less able children can be guided by their more capable peers, without needing a certain level of expertise in order to enter the participation, as the music provides the means to communicate and interact together.

In a similar way, Ockelford et al. (2011) found that for children with PMLD the earliest sound making became more intentional as awareness of sounds and silence developed and music's usefulness in interaction became evident. Copying and anticipation were fundamental to this music making. It would seem that a desire to communicate and a growing awareness of the properties of sound and music combined together.

One interview study participant spoke about the "universality" of music (data item, p.176), and another about music as 'being absorbed from before birth' (data item p.176). These findings seem to point to the unique character of music as compared to other Children's Centre activities as it offers a learning and development

environment for everyone irrespective of age or ability. The observation study (phase 3) revealed that when compared to art and the outdoor activities music was inescapable. If you were in the room (and able to hear) then the music would be familiar the next time you attended the same group: any learning from the first experience of music could be built upon in subsequent sessions.

#### 7.3.4 Multi-dimensional socialisation in the music activity

Participants spoke of the one-to-one interaction opportunity that the group music making presented for parent and child. It would seem that socialisation in the parent-child group context is multi-layered. Close, intimate one-to-one parent-child interaction space and peer-to-peer group interaction were available at the same time. This may provide a rich learning environment for children to rehearse, try out and practice tasks with close adult guidance in the one-to-one space, and then self-assess with peers in the wider group interaction context.

The questionnaire study results revealed that although the parents in the sample perceived the benefits for their children in attending the music group activity as being most important, they were almost 100% in agreement that they too benefitted with their child in the one-to-one interaction time (p.231). These benefits may be emotional as well as social: the emotional aspect of this close interaction space may contribute to it being especially useful for children's learning.

Dissanayake's (2000, 2004, 2006, 2010) research, discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis, highlights the adaptive function of music in the earliest interactions between mother and infant: its role reinforces the emotional coordination

between the pair, and this intersubjective quality of empathetic shared meanings (Trevarthen and Malloch, 2000) may be a vital component of children's learning abilities. The group activity seems to present an intimate space for close interaction between parent and child beyond the baby-stage of development. It was considered beneficial for both parents and children by participants in both the interview study and questionnaire study.

These aspects of social learning are brought together and illustrated in The Musical-Social-Learning model (Figure 6.4, p. 306): co-participation of child and parent depicts the one-to-one interaction aspect with group socialisation experienced through the performance of synchronous actions that allow for children to reinforce what they have learned and assess themselves against their peers as elements of social learning.

#### 7.4 Cultural learning

In section 2.3.3 of the literature review chapter of this thesis it was suggested that cultural learning is a dynamic process in which individuals, through their participation in cultural processes, may influence those very practices (Rogoff, 2003). The format of parent-child group activities in Children's Centres may therefore vary from centre to centre so as to accommodate the practices of the particular community in which they are located. Aspects of cultural learning that were identified through this research project will be discussed below.

##### 7.4.1 Cultural learning in the music activity

When asking interview participants in phase one of this research project the opening

‘warm-up’ questions it became evident that the majority of prominent musical memories from early childhood were from close moments with parents or other loved ones, and school experiences. Sharing with a loved one seemed to add to the musical experience and perhaps the music enriched the emotional aspect of the moment remembered. Many of the memories recounted by participants were from early childhood and were still quite vivid. It was a sadness to some participants that music had not been part of early childhood memories and there was a sense that it was therefore too late for them to become involved in musical activity later in life.

Parent-child group music activity seems to serve an important cultural function for the sharing of emotional and musical moments together that may help to establish music as a cultural process within the primary relationship. For some parents, engaging in musical activities with their young child was an unfamiliar cultural process, as was suggested by one practitioner in the interview study who found some young fathers hiding behind cupboards when instruments and singing were suggested in a group activity that she ran. What may be natural and familiar in musical terms to one family might be alien and frightening to another. Finding ways to acknowledge the musical lives of each family, making theirs’ a ‘valid musicality’ (Osgood et al., 2013) for the setting by incorporating their music into the group music making would seem to be one way to overcome this alienation. Being responsive to cultural diversity requires sensitivity: it must not be tokenistic but sincerely integrated into the group’s music making. One interview study participant commented on the security of finding familiar songs sung in the Children’s Centres that she had visited as she moved geographically across the country. It helped her young children settle in each new location. The music group needs to be a place for

familiar, traditional songs but this has to include the familiar and traditional songs from the local diverse community that the Children's Centre serves.

Singing familiar songs can convey cultural traditions and behaviours in subtle ways.

In the observation study (phase 3) I observed children taking their turn to jump wildly during the verse of a song when it was 'their turn' and then to sit down immediately the turn moved to the next child. They were clearly really enjoying themselves when it was their turn, smiling and laughing as they jumped but the 'rule' of the song (stand up and jump when your name is sung - sit down when another child's name is sung, your turn is over) seemed more important than was their enjoyment being prolonged. Vygotsky argues that because play is associated with pleasure, a child will suppress what she wants, subject herself to the 'rules', giving up her impulsive actions in order to derive the maximum pleasure from the activity (1978, p.99). In my example this 'rule' seems to have become internalised as self-restraint, and is more usually observable in children older than two years old. This would suggest that the group activity allows children to perform beyond their expected capabilities when with more expert others.

It would appear that the 'culture' of parent-child music group activity is founded on singing well-known songs which are quite conventional in many respects. This may be due to the unexpectedly high number of non-musician practitioners leading these musical activities: their repertoire may not be wide, and they may stick to what they know as they are most confident with that material. Using improvisatory approaches to music making with young children is probably dependent on having what might be considered to be more expert music knowledge and skills.

What became clear from phases one and two (interview and questionnaire studies) of the research was that attendance at the music group seemed to lead to increased music making at home, and music became more important to the wider family, with increased singing and songs used for children's daily routines for those parents who were able to use ideas from the session at home. Individuals are engaging in a cultural process, and thereby changing the socio-cultural processes of the whole family.

#### 7.4.2 Symbolic actions – liminal space

The symbolic actions that occurred as part of the music sessions encouraged co-participation and helped children to interpret cultural norms and meaning (as discussed in section 7.4.1 above): by reinforcing the words with actions and/or repetition, and by following the set pattern of schematized actions children learnt to wait for the clap at the right moment or for their turn in a song and this led to good feelings. Everyone doing the same thing at the same time could be seen as a persuasive and powerful learning device. Children seemed to use the actions as a means of self-assessment in comparing their actions to others, and this may have assisted in building confidence and self-esteem. This cognitive skill relied on memory to recall the words and the actions simultaneously.

Findings from both practitioners and parents in both the interview and the questionnaire studies revealed that speech and language skills of children were perceived to benefit from the musical activity group. Although there was far more speech from the children in the two comparison activity groups, the observation study findings showed that the children could demonstrate their knowledge of words

and their meaning by the use of the correct actions in the songs. Their learning was made visible in a particular way in the music group.

The musical environment seemed to allow for the creation of a liminal space, in which ‘performance’ outside of normal behaviour became possible for both parents and children (for example, a child put on wings and danced in front of the group, and adults and children together ‘acted out’ the narrative of song lyrics). By joining in with the symbolic action the leader, parent and child demonstrated a shared knowledge, meaning and understanding of the cultural tradition of that song, in that place and time. The ritualised, liminal ‘performance’ space applied as much to adults as it did to the children. Music itself seemed to contain, enclose and create a boundary that encircled all participants through the sounds organised in time that then allowed for shared emotional and social experiences that affected the group as a whole. The cultural process (of music making) in some way became the conduit for social and emotional learning. The Musical-Social-Learning model (Figure 6.4, p.306) depicts the symbolic actions as a device for cultural learning, but the whole model could be viewed as a conduit for young children’s cultural learning and development through the inescapable musical learning environment shown encircling the central figure in the model.

#### 7.4.3 Insider-Outsider

Findings from the observation study (phase 3) suggested that children who were new to the group could not join in with the actions or the song because they did not have the knowledge or the skills. This did not depend on age/stage of development but on prior knowledge. This definition of the *Outsider Position* from Rogoff (2003) seems



to encapsulate the music group newcomers' position. "Outsiders are newcomers to the meaning system, with limited understanding of how practices fit together and how they developed from prior events" (p.26). Rogoff goes on to suggest that the issues of insiders and outsiders is connected to the fact that we are continually functioning in a sociocultural context. Taylor and Clark in their findings related to parent-child music group activities speak about a 'virtuous circle' that is set up by the confident and dynamic atmosphere of an established group that enables newcomers to accelerate their assimilation into the group activities (Youth Music, 2006, p.31).

The parent-child music group context offers its participants the chance to learn from and about community and perhaps about belonging. The culture that becomes established within the group is worth preserving and developing. This would seem to contradict the short-term approach to employing a visiting artist on a short-term project basis as the group culture takes time to become established and may be easily lost when a project ends. One interview study musician participant spoke of a tension existing between the manager wanting new people to join the music group and the musician not feeling that the group could be split up because of the bonding.

The literature review chapter of this thesis discussed De Nora's (2011) view that culture and emotion are interlinked and that it is possible to conceive of music as a means of constructing emotions. The emotional learning aspects that this study has revealed will be discussed next.

## 7.5 Emotional learning

Interview study parent participants remembered their babies' first reaction to music most frequently being an emotional response. Research (reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis) indicates that from birth, musical and rhythmically structured narratives characterise our earliest interactions with our primary caregiver. The shared empathetic meaning in these interactions builds emotional bonds and connections between the dyad.

The parent-child one-to-one interaction opportunity that was found to exist in the group music making activity in the studies of this research project may facilitate the development of these early emotional bonds. One interview study participant defined this parent-child interaction space as a connection for 'tuning-in'- she called it 'space for emotional music'.

Parents in the questionnaire study (phase 2) identified what the classical philosophers considered a primary human pursuit, that of 'happiness' that the music group activity engendered in their children and they considered this the most important reason for attending the music group sessions. The observation study findings would suggest that the parent-child shared activity supported affectionate, loving bonds between adults and children and also the group 'performing' together with synchronicity of movement and shared affect experience (group symmetry of interaction as described in the Musical-Social-Learning model, Fig. 6.4, p.306) seemed to promote positive feelings. Happiness and well-being may contribute to 'thriving' in the early years, seen by some as foundational to enabling citizens to flourish and achieve what Plato and Aristotle might have called; 'eudaimonia' or well-being (from thriving).

Positive self esteem may be an important aspect of the ‘school-readiness’ outcomes that the government are persuading Children’s Centres to focus on in their ‘core purpose’ (4Children, 2013).

The group socialisation of the music activity was described by one of the interview study participants as ‘structured interaction’. The observation study findings would suggest that this structure was coordinated by the music and permitted ‘symmetry’ in the groups’ expressions and engagement that was characterised by mutuality or synchrony. It appeared that positive ‘vitality affect’ (Stern, 1985) was experienced simultaneously at particular moments in the session. This symmetry was of “mutual engagement in a communicative process” (Hsu and Fogel, 2003, p.94) of sharing the combination of melody, words and actions of the songs they were singing together. These synchronous musical communicative acts seemed to promote positive feelings amongst the group members and could be one explanation for why parents in the interview study remarked that music group makes their children happy. The happiness was visible by smiles and laughter and children’s requests for “more” or “again” at the end of songs.

By adopting the practitioner-led style, the group shared the same songs, at the same time: this may have contributed to feelings of belonging and unity. Children may also learn rules and conventions of culture through this group symmetry. When everyone does the same thing at the same time the message of the action is emphasised, such as: waiting for a turn, lying still and then jumping up and down according to the words of the song, experiencing the shared sense of anticipation as a song slows before the final clap at the end of the piece. By experiencing such things

as part of a group of parents and children, the overall impact is of positive shared feelings with a desire for all to conform, but acceptance when they do not. The music helps in this – music moves in time so that there is not the time to dwell on things and there are chances to try again with the next song.

I should like to suggest that the close physical contact, the affectionate touch from their parent and the shared group symmetry all contributed to a child's enjoyment and pleasure during the music group sessions and to their increased confidence and self-esteem through active participation in songs which are familiar to the whole group. This helps to reinforce their own knowledge of the musical material and creates an opportunity to assess their knowledge and 'performance' against that of the adults and other children. The observation study goes some way to support the findings of the first two studies in that the rationale from parents and professionals indicated that emotional, social and developmental benefits were most important reasons for music groups in Children's Centres and the observation study results have found evidence to support these aspects strongly occurring in the music group.

#### 7.5.1 Emotional anxiety and the observing role of parents

The interview study data suggested that some parents, and perhaps also practitioners experience inhibition and embarrassment when participating in music group activities with their young children. The questionnaire study results appeared to show that the practitioner group perceived that parents felt more nervous about attending music groups than the parent group participants reported themselves. However, it appeared from these parent group results that the youngest parents in this sample (aged 16-26 years) were more nervous about attending the music groups than the majority age group of parents in this study (27-35 years) because they were nervous

of groups, whereas the oldest age group of parents (36-46+years) were more nervous than the majority age group of parents because they were nervous about as well as about their musical ability. Those parents who responded that they were not nervous about attending the music group seemed to feel that their mood improved from attending the music sessions more than those parents who said they were nervous.

Perhaps the opportunity to participate with their child in an activity that was led by someone else was misinterpreted as parental nervousness to join in when it may have been a welcome chance to step back from their expected parental guiding role for that short time (this was discussed further in section 7.3.2 above). Often the focus of the parent-child activity groups at Children's Centres is on interaction and bonding, with the parent expected to take the lead with their child. It may be that the structure of the music group activity provides a break from this arrangement because the music leads the interaction and the parent can therefore follow with their child in a co-participatory role which may help to build their confidence in their parenting skills. The questionnaire results from the parent sample seem to indicate that parents did not want to take more of a leading role in the music group, nor take more of a lead with their child in the session. They seem to benefit from being part of their children's learning experience. These responses to the questionnaire items might suggest that parents enjoy having the music leader to model ideas and to learn from them.

Some of the interview study data revealed that negative musical experiences at school or through learning an instrument as a child had led some participants to believe that they were not good at music. These perceptions may account for some

participants feeling nervous about attending the music group activity, and other individuals may have social anxiety that makes going into any group difficult.

This questionnaire study sample of practitioners perceived that the parents benefitted from the music group sessions more than the parents themselves reported that they did, in particular in terms of making friends and improvements to their mood and confidence. However, the parent group were still positive in their perceptions of the emotional benefits for themselves and their children, with 90% of the parent sample agreeing that both they and their child's mood were lifted by attending the music group activity.

Scott-Hall's (2008) study of parents attending music in similar settings also found positive emotional reactions in her findings. Gudmundsdottir (2010) found that all parent participants in her study, irrespective of their age group, scored higher than expected in measurements of subjective mental well-being.

The Musical-Social-Learning model (Figure 6.4, p.306) suggests that several aspects of the figure may relate to emotional learning: the affectional ties that are encouraged through parent and child co-participation; the positive 'vitality affect' (Stern, 1985) experiences through the group symmetry (based on Hsu and Fogel, 2003) of mutual engagement in the songs; and the resultant positive feelings that were demonstrated by smiles and laughter. These emotional learning aspects are enabled by the inescapable nature of the musical environment.

## 7.6 Music practice in Children's Centres

### 7.6.1 Musical parenting

The interview study (phase 1) data revealed participants' perceptions that it was possible for parents to learn from the music leaders' modelling of activities, and they were able to copy and develop these ideas for use at home with their children. One parent participant talked about 'practising' new songs at home, developing the material by adding new verses to distract her children. Another practitioner participant believed that music from the group sessions could be used throughout daily routines with children at home, and this was supported by results from analysis of parent participants' data from the questionnaire study.

These parent participants (from the questionnaire study - phase 2) seemed fairly neutral about any improvements to their parenting skills gained through attendance at the music group sessions. In spite of this it would appear that music became more important at home to those parents who used ideas from the sessions at home with their children: this was mentioned above in section 7.4.1 as a feature of cultural learning.

### 7.6.2 Music practice

When interview data (phase 1) from the musicians were analysed it became clear that musicians believed that the positive emotional benefits of music activity were most important, in contrast to other practitioners in the sample who felt that learning and development were most beneficial.

The benefits to musical skills were seen as important significantly more by musicians and Children's Centre practitioners than by managers in the questionnaire study results. Of lesser importance to musicians compared to the other professional groups were the developmental benefits and the fact that adult and child learn together by participation in musical activities.

This research provided information about the types of musical activities that are included in Children's Centre music group sessions – well over half of all the music practitioners in the questionnaire study included singing familiar songs and lots of repetition, and about half of them included songs with the children's names, and the use of props, hiding games, and the inclusion of new and unusual songs. Just under half the same group followed the child's musical lead and the same number used a structured format.

The three interview study musicians (phase 1) had each explained that they liked to use improvisatory musical activities in their groups. None of them had a formal classical music training background although one was a music therapist who was a



singer songwriter. It would be interesting to explore the musical training background of musicians who work in early childhood music education and their pedagogical approaches.

The observation study findings revealed that the practitioner-led music group provided a relaxed and informal setting where children were free to participate as they wished in a space with toys and other materials available for free play. This research project has discovered that non-musicians are leading music groups in Children's Centres and perhaps their skills and knowledge allow for a different sort of practice to emerge. There is a question about what defines a music practitioner in a Children's Centre as a 'musician'?

The practitioners in both the interview study and the questionnaire study perceived that the learning and developmental benefits of music were the most beneficial reason for including music in the Children's Centre programme of activities. The observation study finding that the practitioner-led approach of the music group influenced the learning environment for the families as compared to the art and the outdoor activities. Some early childhood research (which was reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis) recommends well-planned, 'teacher' devised activities as being the most successful for children (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2006; Sylva et al., 2004), and that music learning cannot be separated from other areas of learning in early childhood (Moorhead and Pond, 1941; Tickell, 2011). The body of research that relates to the transfer benefits of music to other areas of learning also supports the practitioners' perceptions (Anvari, Trainor, Woodside, and Levy, 2002; Bilhartz et

al., 1999; Eastlund Gromko, 2005; Gromko and Poorman, 1998; Habegger, 2010; Schellenberg, 2011; Schellenberg and Weiss, 2013; Schellenberg, 2005; Stalinski and Schellenberg, 2012) that music benefits speech and language, other areas of development and adult and child learning together (Boone and Cunningham, 2001; Hallam, 2010; Kirschner and Tomasello, 2009, 2010; Rabinowitch et al. 2013)

Findings from the questionnaire and interview study suggest that the Children's Centre group music sessions are based on established practices of singing traditional or familiar songs and rhymes, and on the use of instruments, puppets and props and repetition. The interview participants suggested that improvisatory approaches may be emerging but the questionnaire study which included a larger group of music leaders, did not appear to be as strongly supportive of following the child's lead as the three music practitioners who were interviewed had been. Some individual questionnaire participants added additional elements that they thought were useful to include in their music sessions such as listening and musical free play, the use of video, photos and storytelling and what was termed a 'liquid' structure to the sessions.

Although parent participants in both the interview and questionnaire studies were very positive about their experiences in these music activities what remains unclear is whether the traditional singing pedagogical approach is attractive to all families. Clearly some of the young fathers spoken about by one interview participant preferred more playful musical approaches with instruments and recorded music to a 'led' - style of music activity. She thought this might be because of bad school experiences and the music leader appeared to be like a 'teacher'.

The observation study analysis showed that although traditional singing was the main pedagogical approach of the music activity group the learning environment was informal: there was no formal circle created with the expectation that children should sit with their parents throughout the session. Children could join in as and when they wished with other play activities which were available for them to choose in a different part of the room. Parents generally participated in the music activity and the children came to their laps to be bounced and lifted for the songs that they knew involved these movements. This would indicate that although the children may have been engaged with a different play activity they were still listening to the music and planned their participation in the music according to their preferences. This aspect is depicted in the Musical-Social-Learning model (Figure 6.4, p.306) as the musical environment that circles the activities in the central figure, illustrating that even if not actively participating in all the elements of the musical learning process, the music is nonetheless permeating consciousness, and activating a cognitive response in children as they select the songs in which they wish to participate.

### 7.6.3 Children's cognitive development

From open observation of the children's behaviour during the music activity sessions some thoughts arose about higher order functions related to the use of the musical environment. Children as described above in section 7.6.2 were free to select for themselves when they wished to join the music activity. Observations of children appeared to indicate that they had knowledge of the song and the actions before the song began, as they sometimes prepared themselves for the song by climbing on a lap or moving to the mat in readiness for the jumping song, this appears to demonstrate that the song title conveyed sufficient information for them to recall the

activity. The title of a song is an abstract notion requiring cognitive processing skills to link the words to the remembered activity and possibly the feelings associated with having performed it before. The children also appeared to make use of their parents or other peers in the self-assessment process: checking that they were correct in their cognitive skill in selecting the right preparation prior to the song, this could be observed by means of eye contact with parents and watching the actions of their peers. Rogoff (1991) suggests that cognitive learning is embedded culturally and this would appear to be the case in the above example. The knowledge of the song is a cognitive, yet culturally situated skill. The knowledge is of a musical tradition in time and place, perhaps passed down through generations from that place.

Vygotsky describes the “social origins of indirect (mediated) memory” (1978, p.38) where higher order functions are characterised by self-generated stimulation, through “the creation and use of artificial stimuli which become immediate causes of behaviour” (p.39). I would like to suggest that the children in the examples above demonstrated active engagement in making the link between the sign (the title of the song and the introductory music) and the link to the actions and perhaps the ensuing positive feelings. It is what Vygotsky terms a “complex, mediated act”. He suggests that this example of sign use is a form of culturally-based psychological processing, as the child in this example used “*extrinsic stimuli to control her behaviour from the outside*” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.40).

As a pedagogical approach the informal structure allowed children the freedom to follow their own desire and yet the lure of the musical activity, previously experienced, engaged them enough to re-join the group to rehearse, practice and develop their skills. Participation in the actions to the songs required prior knowledge, combined with memory of both words and melody in the correct sequence, coordinated together with the physical signs (actions). These cognitive skills combined and experienced in the social context of the group appeared to be enjoyable to such an extent that children would select to engage in them: they seemed to give rise to pleasure, with group smiles and laughter and an observable shared positive ‘vitality affect’ (Stern, 1985).

The learning in the parent-child group music-making context appeared to have musical, social, emotional, cultural and cognitive features. The Musical-Social-Learning model (Figure 6.4, p.307) displays the various learning features in the central figure. The musical environment encircles the whole and is the means by which the learning occurs, I interpreted the child and parent co-participation as social and emotional; the use of the symbolic actions as cultural and cognitive; the group affect experience was emotional learning and participating together as a group allowing for cognitive and social learning; the observation of smiles and laughter and children asking for “more” or “again” as positive emotional expressions.

## 7.7 Implications

### 7.7.1 Implications for future research

This research project has signalled several areas for subsequent research exploration.

- (I) Firstly, an experimental study based on expectation theory (Huron, 2006; Meyer, 1956), and measurements of subjective mental well-being in parents and young children attending music groups would be valuable. It appeared that the use of *rallentando* at particular harmonic points in song repertoire led to expressions of joy and pleasure, in particular laughter and smiles amongst children and adults. Song examples could be used with different chordal underpinning (e.g. chord IV or chord V) to test whether it is the tempi or the harmony that causes the build up of expectation, and significance of including physical movements could also be investigated at those ‘peak’ moments.
- (II) An unexpected result related to the age group of parents and their experience of the music group emerged from the questionnaire study, and needs further investigation. What is it, if anything, about being in the majority age group that contributes to confidence and enjoyment of the music group? Is it just the music group that is affected, or any Children’s Centre family activity?
- (III) The observation study revealed a finding about pointing, which occurred in the art and the outdoor activity groups but not in the music group. This would be an interesting area of research in relation to types of thinking and the pointing gesture in young children and adults. It would be particularly

interesting to explore pointing in young children in their spontaneous, child-initiated music-making amongst peers and to compare this with music-making where adults are present, both with spontaneous and directed music to see what, if any, are the differences in pointing between the three groups.

- (IV) Further research could yield more information about the group symmetry of interaction in parent-child music activities. More detailed micro-analytic studies of parent-child music groups with a larger sample size and multiple groups could test the possible associations between symmetry of interaction and positive emotion.

#### 7.7.2 Implications for Practice

- (I) A key finding from the questionnaire study was the number of non-specialist practitioners leading musical activities as part of their work in Children's Centres. An implication for practice appears to be in the area of training, and in the possibility of establishing formal qualifications in early childhood music education. On the one hand it may be perceived that singing simple songs and playing percussion instruments is something most early childhood practitioners should be able to do and have been adequately prepared for as part of their training. By raising awareness of practitioners' implicit musical knowledge and encouraging self-reflection about music and musicality, Addressi and Carugati (2010) found in their research that early childhood trainee teachers developed a greater awareness of their teaching role in using music. Children's Centre practitioners are a diverse professional group, and so it would be valuable to devise a model of 'in-service' professional

development to enhance and augment existing skills and practice in the area of music. This could incorporate some of the findings from this research along with theories that may be already familiar, including notions of child-led and initiated musical play as well as group music activity ideas. This results of this research lead me to support the establishment of professional music standards that are required for leading group music making activities for parents and young children.

- (II) The benefits of parent-child group music-making (and symbolic actions) in building a sense of belonging and unity may be valuable when working with families who may feel excluded or isolated for whatever reason.
- (III) A new practitioner role might be constructed by combining knowledge and skills of early childhood music practice with the ethos and values associated with Children's Centre practitioner practice – a sort of social pedagogy, that has empowerment of individuals as a central concern (as discussed in chapter one of this thesis) - that of the social music pedagogue who might utilise music-based approaches to their work with families with young children.
- (IV) The findings from this study suggest that individuals are very positive about the benefits of music for children across several domains: music is a means of encouraging co-participation of parent and child, and thereby of enjoyable and intimate interaction.



### 7.7.3 Implications for policy:

- (I) Results from this research indicate that participation in parent-child group music activity has benefits for personal, social and emotional development (PSED), and for the speech and language domain (Communication/literacy). Both are considered prime areas of learning under the revised EYFS (Tickell, 2011). The 'school-readiness' agenda seeks to improve the home learning environment of those children considered at risk of low cognitive school-readiness scores. In home environments in which parents provided stimulation, the children's cognitive skills were found to improve regardless of their socioeconomic position (Pordes-Bowers, Strelitz, Allen & Donkin, 2012). The findings from my own research revealed that children's centre musical experience led to music becoming more important at home, with the majority of parent participants in the questionnaire study singing songs from centre sessions at home. This indicates that music group activity can have a beneficial impact on the home learning environment, and could be encouraged as an intervention for families seeking ideas for ways to help their children's learning at home.
  
- (II) The very positive responses by all participants (parents and a range of professionals) in the questionnaire study indicate the strength of feeling about music as a means of teaching and learning in early childhood: they do not consider it to be a niche subject area, and they were well informed about the benefits of music in learning and parent-child attachment. I would advocate that music should be considered to be a mainstream requirement for effective teaching in early childhood, and not as an added extra for 'enrichment'

purposes. It is fundamentally helpful for young children's social, cultural and emotional development, and the use of 'symbolic' activities may help with understanding rules and conventions of conversation and communication. Music provides an environment for learning that is inescapable, and is therefore useful for teaching purposes as week-by-week learning can be built upon and embedded through repetition.

- (III) There are financial implications related to policy. Music in early childhood needs funding through the regional music hubs. The Music Plan for England which resulted from the Henley Review (Henley, 2011) does not include early childhood in the required music hub offer of music services (for which there is funding). Music education appears to begin, according to the document, for children at five years old. This is clearly not the case, as evidenced by the first three chapters of this thesis, and early childhood music education should be an integrated aspect of music hub activity. What must be avoided, in my opinion, is a scaled-down version of the primary music education approach delivered by music teachers. Early childhood music education includes spotting, nurturing and developing musical potential in children, yet also, and perhaps more importantly, enables the social, emotional, cultural and musical development of all young children and their families. These two are not in opposition and may at times, achieve the same ends, but the educational frameworks and philosophies are different.
- (IV) A regulatory framework is needed for the provision of music services in early childhood settings. There are no required qualifications for teaching music at

this level, and as a result there is a range of different sorts of providers with a wide definition of what might constitute ‘quality’ music education. This is not a new challenge to the sector: there have been calls for regulatory frameworks over the past decade (Young, 2007; Young et al., 2006). The sector is complicated to understand and negotiate, with no clearly defined pathway to become an early childhood music educator (or social music pedagogue), and as a result there are business franchisees, music graduates, music therapists, early childhood practitioners and those with no training at all providing music classes. Children’s Centre managers’ decisions about the quality of music provision need to be based on clear and rigorous evidence about different practitioners’ capabilities.

## 7.8 Concluding remarks

From these discussions I would like to argue that the parent-child music group activity provides a sophisticated learning environment for young children. The presence of their parent participating with them provides an emotional component that appears to add to the positive experience for the child. There is the chance for intimate, one-to-one interactions between parent and child that both of the pair find beneficial. There is also the wider peer-to-peer interaction space in which self-assessment and reinforcement of learning takes place, with the symmetry of experiencing the same actions at the same time seeming to intensify the sense of belonging or shared ‘flow’ experience or ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1982). The musical environment is inescapable: if you are in the room where it takes place, this allows for cumulative learning: the songs will be familiar the next time you attend. The music group is the source of cultural learning: with expert adult and peer guides to

model participation in action songs that have significance for the community of participants. How much these songs represent the culture of every local family in the community is unclear: it may be that the songs are representative of a culture that the Children's Centre wants to inculcate amongst the families in the local community. The music group activity provides cognitive challenges that can be rehearsed and practiced week by week with no compulsion, to get them right or to participate if the participants do not feel ready.

This thesis suggests a theoretical model to describe the socio-cultural learning context of music group activity in Children's Centres. The Musical-Social-Learning model (Fig. 6.4, p.306) offers a contribution to new knowledge about early childhood music education based on Vygotsky's theoretical framework that illustrates how parent-child music group activity in the Children's Centre involves social, emotional, cultural and cognitive learning. Vygotsky argues that learning takes place in collaborative processes where "*children grow into the intellectual life of those around them*" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.88).

By providing musical activities for families with young children, irrespective of their ability to pay for them, the intellectual, cultural and emotional life of such families is enriched and music may become more important to that family as a result. What the new model attempts to demonstrate is the dynamic interplay between the phenomenon of organised sound in time (music), its cultural significance to those who participate in it, and the social and emotional connections that are created in the group by the shared musical experiences.

The reason why music is offered to families in Children's Centres is that it provides a rich learning environment in a multi-dimensional social interaction space for parents and children that contributes to their well-being and happiness.

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*Ethics Committee*

***PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - Interview***

***Title: The Rationale for Music in Children's Centres***

Please read this carefully before signing the statement of consent over the page.

The 1997 Labour Government's plan was to establish a Children's Centre in every community by 2010. Their target of 3500 has been reached and it would seem opportune to look at what is happening in terms of music in children's centres.

Music in early childhood has been of interest to researchers for several years. Music and song appear to be universally utilised by parents and their infants in early interactions. It is also a useful medium for expressing emotions and helps in learning language in the early years. Evidence is suggesting that music may be helpful in the area of wellbeing and confidence. This research will seek to explore and understand the impact of group music-making in the lives of parents, children and professionals working in a children's centre

This short pilot study is aimed at establishing a rationale for a series of further studies to investigate the effects of music on participants in a children's centre.

I request your permission to undertake this research. For this pilot study only adults will be involved and their individual consent will be sought at the time of interview. Information given will remain confidential. General themes that emerge from the interviews will be used to develop a survey questionnaire. The interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure an accurate transcription of what is said. The audio recordings will be transferred to CD and stored along with any documents in a lockable filing cabinet – the investigator will have the only key. All data will be analysed or transcribed by the researcher, who is bound by strict ethical guidelines not to disclose the names of participants to anyone other than her supervisors.

Findings from this study will be published in journal articles and conference presentations. No names or identifying personal details will be fed back to the University or given in any presentation of findings, and it should not be possible for anyone to recognise you, your centre, nor any member of staff or parent.

You will be free to withdraw your centre at any time without giving a reason, and free to request that any data collected is removed from the records. Please feel free to ask any questions.

**Investigator Contact Details:**

Jessica Pitt  
Education Department, Room 139 Queens Building, Southlands College, Roehampton  
University  
London  
SW15 5PU  
e-mail :pittj@roehampton.ac.uk

**Consent Statement:**

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

**Director of Studies Contact Details:    Head of Department Contact Details:**

Professor David Hargreaves

Marilyn Holness OBE

Room 135 Queens Building

Southlands College

Roehampton University

D.J.Hargreaves@roehampton.ac.uk

:    M.Holness@roehampton.ac.uk

0208 392 3224

020 8392 3374



*Ethics Committee***PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - Filming*****Title: The role of music with participants in Children's Centres***

Please read this carefully before signing the statement of consent over the page.

Music in early childhood has been of interest to researchers for several years. Music and song appear to be universally utilised by parents and their infants in early interactions. It is also a useful medium for expressing emotions and helps in learning language in the early years. Evidence is suggesting that music may be helpful in the area of wellbeing and confidence. This research will seek to explore and understand the impact of group music-making in the lives of parents, children and professionals working in a children's centre.

I should like to video record the session today in order to gather general information about the activities and aspects of you and your child's/ren's participation. This information will be used to guide the design of the next phase of my research. (For example I shall be considering where best to position a video camera and what to include on an observation schedule). The recorded material will be stored in a lockable place – the investigator will have the only key. All data will be analysed or transcribed by the researcher, who is bound by strict ethical guidelines not to disclose the names of participants to anyone.

Findings from this research will be published in journal articles and conference presentations. No names or identifying personal details will be fed back to the University or given in any presentation of findings.

You will be free to withdraw your centre at any time without giving a reason, and free to request that any data collected is removed from the records. Please feel free to ask any questions.

**Investigator Contact Details:**

Jessica Pitt  
Education Department  
Room 139 Queens Building, Southlands College  
Roehampton University  
London  
SW15 5PU  
020 8392 3392  
e-mail :pittj@roehampton.ac.uk

**Consent Statement:**

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator or you can also contact my Director of Studies.

**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

Professor David Hargreaves  
Room 135 Queens Building  
Southlands College  
Roehampton University  
D.J.Hargreaves@roehampton.ac.uk  
0208 392 3224

However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of  
Department

**Head of Department Contact Details:**

Marilyn Holness (OBE)  
Roehampton University,  
Roehampton Lane,  
Cedar House  
Froebel College,  
SW15 5PU  
Email: [m.holness@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:m.holness@roehampton.ac.uk) Telephone: 020 8392 3374

## Questions for Interview Study:

### Appendix C

#### Parents

##### General:

1. Tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind.
2. Describe any musical training you've had?
3. What is your earliest musical memory?

##### Specific

15. Can you tell me about your baby's first reaction to music
12. Can you tell me about things that happen in the music session that you think are really good for him/her?
14. How do these sessions influence your musical activity at home?
10. How do you feel to participate as a parent in the music group?
6. Why do you think music is included in the centre programme?  
depending on the answer - follow-up question:  
**Either:** Are there any benefits for the families?  
**Or:** Are there any benefits to the centre?
21. If you had to cut services – which activities would you save?
22. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

## Nursery Worker

### General:

1. Tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind.
2. Describe any musical training you've had?
3. What is your earliest musical memory?
4. What are the positive aspects of your job?
5. Any negative aspects?

### Specific

18. Can you describe a musical activity that you feel went well?
19. Can you describe one that you feel didn't go well?
11. In what ways do you think children benefit from music?
6. Why do you think music is included in the centre programme?  
depending on the answer - follow-up question:  
**Either:** Are there any benefits for the families?  
**Or:** Are there any benefits to the centre?
20. Please describe how musical activities are planned here?
21. If you had to cut services – which activities would you save?
22. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

## CC Manager

### General:

1. Tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind.
2. Describe any musical training you've had?
3. What is your earliest musical memory?
4. What are the positive aspects of your job?
5. Any negative aspects?

### Specific

7. Why did you choose to include music in your programme?
8. What made you choose the type of music that's offered here?
9. Why do you think parents bring their children to music groups?
11. In what ways do you think children benefit from music?
21. If you had to cut services which activities would you save?
22. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

## Musician

### General:

1. Tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind.
2. Describe any musical training you've had?
3. What is your earliest musical memory?
4. What are the positive aspects of working in a CC
5. Any negative aspects?

### Specific

9. Why do you think parents bring their children to music groups?
6. Why do you think music is included in the centre programme?  
depending on the answer - follow-up question:  
**Either:** Are there any benefits for the families?  
**Or:** Are there any benefits to the centre?
16. Tell me about a typical session
11. In what ways do you think children benefit from music?
13. How do you think the sessions influence musical activity at home?
22. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

CC staff: health visitor, family support, social worker

General:

1. Tell me about a musical event that sticks in your mind.
2. Describe any musical training you've had?
3. What is your earliest musical memory?
4. What are the positive aspects of working in a CC
5. Any negative aspects?

Specific

6. Why do you think music is included in the centre programme?  
depending on the answer - follow-up question:  
**Either:** Are there any benefits for the families?  
**Or:** Are there any benefits to the centre?
9. Why do you think parents bring their children to music groups?

Do you ever sit in on sessions?

11. **If yes:** In what ways do children benefit from the music
13. How do you think the sessions influence musical activity at home?
17. Tell me about any music you use in your work?
21. If you had to cut services – which activities would you save?
22. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

**This survey questionnaire is part of a PhD research project funded by The Froebel Institute through The University of Roehampton. Your participation is very important to us and your opinions will contribute to a greater understanding of the part music plays in the lives of young children and their families. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. (I apologise for the adverts running through this survey!)**

This questionnaire is intended for parents/carers who attend music group sessions at a Children's Centre - If this isn't you, I should like to thank you for your interest and wish you well - unfortunately your participation is not possible on this occasion.

**\* 1. Do you attend your local Children's Centre for musical activity groups with your child/ren?**

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your child/ren.

**2. What is your gender?**

- ☐ **Female**
- ☐ **Male**
- ☐ **Prefer not to say**



**3. Age group?**

- ☐ 16-21
- ☐ 22-26
- ☐ 27-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46+

**4. Age of child/ren you take to music group at the Children's Centre**

|         | 0-1                      | 1y                       | 2y                       | 3y                       | 4y+                      |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Child 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**5. Gender of child/ren?**

|         | Female                   | Male                     |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Child 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Child 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**6. Can you remember the first time your child/ren reacted to music? Please select the reaction that is most similar**

|  | <b>Child<br/>1</b>       | <b>Child<br/>2</b>       | <b>Child<br/>3</b>       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Laughter</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Smile</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Calming</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Recognition fo tunes from pregnancy</b>                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>I could see when they liked a song/piece of music</b>             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Other (Please briefly describe their first reaction to msuic)</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**7. How important to you are the following reasons for attending music groups with your child/ren?**

**Please give each item a star rating from 1-10.**

**1= not important and 10= very important.**

**(You can select the same star rating more than once)**

**Going to music group makes my child happy**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Going to music group improves my mood**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Music group is a chance for my child/ren to socialise in a group**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Music group helps me make friends**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Music helps my child's/ren's overall learning**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**My child/ren learns about music**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**I like to see her/him having fun with her/his friends**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Other (Please add details in box below)**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

**8. I sing more at home as a result of going to music group at the Children's Centre**

☐ **1 Strongly Disagree** ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ **6** ☐ **7 Strongly Agree**

**9. Using the songs during the day helps with the daily routine with my child/ren**

☐ **1 Strongly Disagree** ☐ **2** ☐ **3** ☐ **4** ☐ **5** ☐ **6** ☐ **7 Strongly Agree**

**10. Using the songs at home improves my child's/ren's mood**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**11. Other members of the family sing more at home**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**12. Music has become more important at home**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**13. I was a little nervous about attending the music group**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**14. I was a little nervous about attending the music group because of my feelings about my musical ability**

**Please select how much you agree or disagree with this statement**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**15. I was a little nervous about attending the music group because I am nervous of groups**

**Please select how much you agree or disagree with this statement**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

**16. Attending the music group has increased my confidence in my musical ability**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**17. Anxiety about my musical ability has decreased since I attended the music group at the Children's Centre**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**18. I have learned about my child's development through participating with her/him in the music sessions**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

## **I should like to gain your views about the structure and detail of the music sessions**

Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following:

**19. Being led through the session by the music leader allows me to relax and participate with my child/ren**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**20. I'd like to take more of a leading role in the group**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**21. The sessions are too repetitive - I'd like more new songs**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**22. I'd like to take more of a leading role with my child in the music sessions**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**23. I like having familiar songs and rhymes in the session**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**24. Using familiar songs builds my child's/ ren's confidence**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**25. Using new songs stretches my child's/ ren's development**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**26. I have used ideas learned from the sessions at home**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**27. I have purchased/made props or materials used in the sessions at home**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**28. My parenting skills have improved because of what I've learned at the music group sessions**

**Please select how much you agree or disagree with this statement**

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

**29. Thinking about the music sessions - how beneficial are the following for your child?**

**Please select a response for each item**

|  | Not<br>beneficial        | Beneficial               | Very<br>beneficial       | Don't<br>know            |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Their socialisation with peers                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Our interaction together                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Their Speech and language skills               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Their Physical development                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Music helps with all their learning            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Their Musical skills                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Their Singing has improved                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| They love music group                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| They have the chance to express their feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| They learn traditional songs                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**30. The music sessions include different activities. Which are your child's/ren's favourite elements of the music session?**

**Please rank these with the favourite first and least favourite at the end of the list**

**31. Please select any elements of the music session your child dislikes**

- ☐ Playing instruments
- ☐ Songs that ask for a child's suggestions or uses their name
- ☐ The structured format - knowing what is coming next
- ☐ Singing familiar songs
- ☐ Song requests
- ☐ The use of props e.g.; scarves, toys, special instruments, lycra
- ☐ Hiding games - e.g.; peekaboo
- ☐ Puppets
- ☐ Music leader follows children's ideas spontaneously
- ☐ None

**32. The following statements relate to your attendance with your child/ren at music group.**

**Please select whom you think benefits most**

|   | Me                       | All                      | Child<br>1               | Child<br>2               | Child<br>3               |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Time for one-to-one interaction               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Close physical contact                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I learn the songs                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I learn techniques to use with my child       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Being part of my child's learning experience  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Confidence building                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lifts mood                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other - (Please provide details in box below) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



**33. Is there anything else you should like to tell me about attending music groups with your child/ren at the Children's Centre?**



**Thank you for taking part!**

This survey questionnaire is part of a PhD research project funded by The Froebel Institute through The University of Roehampton. Your participation is very important to us and your opinions will contribute to a greater understanding of the part music plays in the lives of young children and their families. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this way. (I apologise for the adverts running through this survey!) Jessica Pitt

1. Does your Children's Centre include musical activities with parents as part of your programme?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

2. Does the Children's Centre hold a specific music/singing group for parents/carers and children?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

3. What is your job title?

4. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say

5. How important to you are the following reasons for including music groups at the Children's Centre?

Please give each item a star rating from 1-10  
1=not important and 10=very important  
(You can select the same start rating more than once)



**Increases good feelings for the child/ren**

**Increases good feelings for the parent/carer**

**Benefits to child/ren's social development**

**Helps parents/carers make friends**

**Music helps child/ren's other learning outcomes e.g.communication skills**

**Children learn about music**

**It gives parents the chance to watch their child/ren enjoying themselves with others**

**Demand from parents. They want music groups**

**Other (please add details in box below)**

**6. Do you lead musical activities at a Children's Centre?**

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

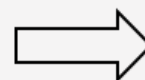
7. Thinking about the music sessions that you lead - Please select those items that you include

- ☐ Playing instruments
- ☐ Songs that ask for a child's suggestions or uses their name
- ☐ A structured format
- ☐ Singing familiar songs
- ☐ Song requests
- ☐ Lots of repetition
- ☐ The use of props e.g.; scarves, toys, special instruments, lycra
- ☐ Hiding games - e.g.; peekaboo
- ☐ Puppets
- ☐ New and unusual songs
- ☐ Following a child's lead spontaneously
- ☐ Other (please add in the box below

8. How beneficial are the following items in parent/carer and child music making sessions?

Please rank these with the most important first and the least important at the end of the list

- Socialisation
- Good feelings
- Inclusive activity
- Interaction between adult and child
- Learning: music
- Learning: Curriculum
- Developmental benefits
- Overcoming musical anxiety
- Parenting skills
- Parents have been advised to attend
- Learning from modelling



|                           | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7                     | 8                     | 9                     | 10                    |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Socialisation</b>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Good feelings</b>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>Inclusive activity</b> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

|                                     |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Interaction between adult and child | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Learning: music                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Learning: Curriculum                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Developmental benefits              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Overcoming musical anxiety          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Parenting skills                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Parents have been advised to attend | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Learning from modelling             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

9. Do you use any of the following as part of your work?

Please select any that apply

- ☐ Singing as part of a session
- ☐ Playing CD
- ☐ Using instruments with parents/carers and children
- ☐ Talk about the benefits of music/singing with parents/carers
- ☐ I don't use any music in my work
- ☐ Other(please state in box below)

10. I feel inhibited about leading music activities as part of my work

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

☐ 6

☐ 7 Strongly Agree

☐ Does not apply to my work role

11. Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

I believe that parents/carers sing more at home as a result of going to music group at the Children's Centre

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

12. I believe parents/carers use the songs during the day to help with the daily routine with their child

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

13. I believe that other members of the family sing more at home because of sharing songs from the music groups

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

14. In your opinion how important are the following reasons for including music groups in your Children's Centre programme?

Please give each item a star rating from 1-10  
1=least important and 10=very important  
(You can select the same star rating more than once)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Structured session                          | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Led by a practitioner                       | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Chance to explore instruments               | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Chance to learn new songs                   | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Singing together                            | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Benefits to speech and language development | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Learning across the Curriculum              | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

15. Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

I think many adults are embarrassed about singing with their children and other adults in a group

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

16. I believe this embarrassment is because of feelings about their own musical ability

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

17. I believe this embarrassment is about feeling nervous in groups

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree

18. I think attending music groups can increase confidence in parents'/carers' musical ability

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly Agree

19. I think attending music groups can help parents/carers with feeling less nervous in groups

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree



20. In your opinion how important are the following reasons for including music groups in your Children's Centre programme?

Please give each item a star rating from 1-10  
1=least important and 10=very important  
(You can select the same star rating more than once)

**Multi-Sensory experience**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Lots of repetition**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Adult/Child learn together**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**Inclusive activity (from birth onwards irrespective of ability)**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

21. Parents/Carers learn more about their child's/ren's development by attending music group

☐ 1 Strongly Disagree ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 Strongly agree

22. Thinking about music group sessions - how beneficial are the following for the children?  
Please select a response for each item

|  | Not<br>beneficial        | Beneficial               | Very<br>beneficial       | Don't<br>know            |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Their socialisation with peers                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Interaction/bonding with their parent/carer    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Their speech and language skills               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Their physical development                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Music helps with all learning                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Their musical skills                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| They love music group                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| They have the chance to express their feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| They learn traditional songs                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

23. The following statements relate to parent/carer attending music group together  
Please select whom you think benefits most

|  | Parent/Carer             | Both                     | Child                    |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Time for one-to-one interaction                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Close physical contact                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent/Carer learns the songs                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent/Carer learns techniques to use with their child/ren | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent/Carer has the chance to observe their child/ren     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent/Carer is part of their child's learning experience  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Confidence building  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lifts mood   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please provide details in box below)                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

24. In your opinion how important are the following reasons for including music groups in your Children's Centre programme?

Please give each item a star rating from 1-10  
1=least important and 10=very important  
(You can select the same star rating more than once)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| One-to-one interaction opportunity          | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Lifts mood                                  | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Expressive/Creative opportunity             | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Good way to bring families in to the Centre | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| Provides group socialisation opportunity    | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

25. We would really value knowing what (if anything) including music in your Centre has done for you personally

**Thank you for taking part!**

**You have now completed the survey. The information that you have given will be stored anonymously and confidentially by kwiksurvey on a secure platform. Once the study is complete the information will be removed from the kwiksurvey site. I will store the numeric data in a lockable space until my research is completed. It will then be destroyed.**

**This research has been carried out in accordance with Roehampton University's Ethical Guidance and BERA guidelines (British Educational Research Association).**

**If you would like to contact me about my research please e-mail:**

**[pittj@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:pittj@roehampton.ac.uk)**

**I should like to thank you once again.**

**Jessica Pitt**

## Codes for Systematic Observation

## Appendix F

### **Symmetry**

1S Group      2S Parent      3S Peer      4S Leader      5S other adult

### **Asymmetry**

1A Group      2A Parent      3A Peer      4A Leader      5A other adult

### **Unilateral**

2L Parent      3L Peer      4L Leader      5L other adult

### **Disruptive**

2Da Child, 2Db Parent,  
3Da Child 3Db Peer,  
4Da Child, 4Db Leader,  
5Da Child, 5Db other adult

### **Uninvolved**

2U Parent      3U Peer      4U Leader      5U other adult

### **Gross Motor activity 6**

### **Fine motor activity 7**

### **Vocal speak**

8a alone      8b to another

### **Vocal sing 9**

### **Smile/Laugh 10**

**Child-initiated activity**      11

**Adult-initiated activity**      12

**Intimate Zone**      13

**Close Zone**      14

**Free Zone**      15

Table of observation indicators

| Relational Indicator  | Definition  | Example   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Symmetry</b>   | <b>Mutual engagement between partners in participating in communicative process. Both involved</b>  |   |
| 1S Group – (all those participating together children and adults) | Whole group are contributing equally to the communicative process. It is not a sub-group of children or a sub-group of parents it is the whole together | B jumps during his turn in 'Jumping bean' song, other children and parents, look, sing and smile as he jumps. Laughter at the end. MUSIC  |
| 2S Parent-child   |   | C is nibbling a carrot that has been dug up. Mum asks if it's nice, can she try a bit? C feeds it to her, and then to her sibling on Mum's lap they draw close in together and are smiling<br>OUTDOORS  |
| 3S Peer-child   |   | Child A and D both trundle wheelbarrows up to the little house – A and D both go in, exchange glances and talk together. eye contact<br>OUTDOORS  |
| 4S Leader-child   |   | E close to leader as he plays flute, watching intently, then as he finishes playing E hands him the plastic apple he is holding and leader says Hello E , what would you like to sing?  |
| 5S Other adult-child  |   | A is digging, the soil is hard, adult helps by breaking up the soil a little then stands back and watches intently as A carefully gets some soil on her spade (with some assistance from him) and transfers it slowly and carefully into the flowerpot, she then squeals with delight and he laughs. OUTDOORS |

|                       |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>Asymmetry</b>      | <b>There is a common focus in the action, but one of the partners proposes more innovations</b> |   |
| 1A Group              | Leader provides the impetus.  | Whole participating group singing hokey kokey, moving and taking part, leader plays guitar accompaniment and leads the singing and chooses when it's over. MUSIC  |
| 2A Parent-child       |   | F joins in with 'Zoom zoom' lying on the floor, mum is singing it too sitting on a chair. For the repeat F stands up and wiggles her fingers and her body language shows mum that she wants to sit on her lap. Mum picks her up...smile shared between them. The repeat was a more intimate experience for both MUSIC |
| 3A Peer-child         |   | G and H are painting...G bends down and puts both her hands in the picture, looks at them and runs off to the bowl of soapy water, H starts to run too, then comes back and quickly puts his hands in his picture and then runs off to the water. ART   |
| 4A Leader-child       |   | Leader is with 3 children walking towards the logs...Leader: 'shall we see what's underneath?'. She lifts the logs and the children are focused on looking underneath, as is she. OUTDOORS  |
| 5A Other Adult-child  |   | Adult approaches J who is holding a wheelbarrow handle, she taps in the wheelbarrow. J indicates that he likes it and she continues. OUTDOORS   |
| <b>Unilateral (L)</b> | <b>One of the two partners</b>  |   |

|                     |   |  |
|---------------------|---|--|
|                     | <b>regulates her activity upon the other – without shared action. Non acting partner shows interest and helps</b> |  |
| 2L Parent-child     |   | K wants to jump with fairy wings on...she has tried but needs them re-adjusting...goes to Mum who helps by tightening the elastic, whilst singing the song. K then dances enthusiastically. MUSIC                            |
| 3L Peer-child       |   |  |
| 4L Leader-child     |   | Leader and several children are together. Leader is helping one child remove rucksack whilst L talks about wanting to rake...Leader shows interest by talking but finishes the task with the other child. OUTDOORS           |
| 5L Other adult      |   | A is about to disrupt L in his play with plastic insects, adult approaches and finds another insect in the box which she holds up, A takes this for her task. OUTDOORS   |
| <b>Disruptive</b>   | <b>An attempt at innovation that stops the action, Incoherent innovation towards shared action</b>                |  |
| 2Da Child disrupts  | Child disrupts the shared action  | M wants to use a shovel on the guttering ball run, mum gently removes the shovel, M gets the balls and starts to put them down the ball run, mum suggests a different place to start the balls from and M walks off OUTDOORS |
| 2Db Parent disrupts | Parent disrupts the shared action.  | M wants to use a shovel on the ball run, mum explains with hand demonstration how that would damage the guttering and she removes it from M as she talks   |



|                   |  |   |
|-------------------|--|---|
|                   |  | OUTDOORS  |
| 3Da Child         | Child disrupts 'shared' action with peer<br>'shared' action in this category may include play/action alongside but not necessarily with. In some cases the disruption becomes the interaction point between the children | G and H are painting. G offers H and paintbrush he takes it and then throws it on the floor. H then picks up the brush for himself. ART   |
| 3Db Peer          | Peer disrupts 'shared' action with child<br>'shared' action in this category may include play/action alongside but not necessarily with. In some cases the disruption becomes the interaction point between the children | G and H are painting. G offers H and paintbrush he takes it and then throws it on the floor. G's offer is rejected. ART   |
| 4Da Child         | Child disrupts the shared action with leader   | E is close to leader, just shared the moment of symmetry with the plastic apple. Leader asks him what he would like to sing next? And he wanders off MUSIC                                  |
| 4Db Leader        | Leader disrupts the shared action with child   | Leader invites N for a turn in 'jumping bean', N's mum has to get his attention and encourage him to stand...by which time the leader has moved on to another child as N stands ready MUSIC |
| 5Da Child         | Child disrupts shared action with other adult  | O is crying adult trundles a cart over and says 'here do you want this?' she goes to take the handle and then turns back to her mum and rejects it. OUTDOORS                                |
| 5Db other adult   | Other adults disrupts shared action  |   |
| <b>Uninvolved</b> | <b>Partners are not co-regulated – no communication will</b>   |   |
| 2U Parent         | There is no communication will between parent and child  | G and H are painting engrossed in the activity, both their mums are standing  |

|                                    |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
|                                    |   | close by chatting together<br>ART   |
| 3U Peer                            | Peer and child may be engaged in an activity close by but there is not communication will   | K is rolling out playdoh and talking to herself at the same time, three of her peers are busy with the same playdoh activity beside her. There is no communication will between them. ART |
| 4U Leader                          | Leader and child may be close by but there is no communication  | P is busy digging soil and putting it into flowerpot. Leader and dad are standing close by chatting.<br>OUTDOORS  |
| 5U other adult                     | Other adults may be close but no communication will   |   |
| <b>OTHER INDICATORS</b>            |   |   |
| <b>6 Gross motor activity</b>      | Child is using large muscle groups: legs, arms from shoulder. Running, jumping, waving, rocking, swaying, balance                   | B jumps to the 'jumping bean' song  |
| <b>7 Fine motor activity</b>       | Child is using hand movements using finger and thumb, or fingers independently, wiggling fingers or toes                            | K teaches herself how to use the scissors making her fingers work independently<br>ART  |
| <b>8a Vocal speak alone</b>        | Child is speaking but there is no indication of her looking at another. Or a random outburst of speech with no response             | K is rolling playdoh and speaks aloud as she does so. It is unintelligible and no one responds  |
| <b>8b Vocal speak to another</b>   | Child asks a question, answers a question or comments with another  |   |
| <b>9 Vocal sing</b>                | Child can be seen to be singing along to the song of the moment, or can be heard as audible singing if it's spontaneously occurring |   |
| <b>10 Smile/Laugh</b>              |   |   |
| <b>11 Child-initiated activity</b> | Child proposes a new action or behaviour  | Q arrives at the painting area and picks up 2 brushes, one in each hand and paints with them simultaneously ART   |
| <b>12 Adult-initiated activity</b> | Any adult proposes the new action or behaviour  | Leader says: 'Let's do the hokey Kokey next'  |

|                         |   |  |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| <b>13 Intimate zone</b> | Child is either on parent's lap or very close, touching in some way   |  |
| <b>14 Close zone</b>    | Child is close by their parent  |  |
| <b>15 Free zone</b>     | Child is freely active either in the centre of the music circle, freely moving around the art space without their parents' attention, in the outdoors away from their parent's side |  |

| Child   | 1X 2 minute | 2X 2 minute | 3X 2 minute | 4X 2 minute | 5X 2 minute |
|---------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Child a |             |             |             |             |             |
| Child b |             |             |             |             |             |
| Child c |             |             |             |             |             |
| Child d |             |             |             |             |             |
| Child e |             |             |             |             |             |
| Child f |             |             |             |             |             |

Description:

Child a.....

Child b.....

Child c.....

Child d.....

Child e.....

Child f.....

Random number pattern sequence:

1. e a c b d f
2. b d f a e c
3. a e b c d f
4. d b f a e c
5. f e b a d c

With this systematic observation the child is the focus of the observation and the other adults and peers are scored in relation to their interaction with the child that is being observed. If for example parents are talking together with their children focusing on a task nearby the scoring would be 2U (Uninvolved interaction) unless the parent assists the child whilst talking in a way that satisfies their child's need in which case 2L would be the score.

Actions and interactions may be scored more than once within the 2 minute period if they happen as discrete and separate events.

If one activity lasts continuously, score just once.

The codes in the first column in the table below include all variables listed in the row

Observation table reliability test

Time on film started:

Time on film finished:

Child description:

Ch. Music:.....

Ch. Art:.....

Ch. Outdoor:.....

| Variable                                      |                               |                        |  |                                |                           |                   |                          |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Look @ Person                              | Look @ leader                 | Look @ adult           | Look @ peer                            | Look @ other                   | Look @ carer              |                   |                          |
| 2. Look @ Hands                               | Watches other's hands/action  | Look @ own hands       | Watch carer's hands 'symbolic actions' |                                |                           |                   |                          |
| 3. Carer's lap                                | On lap                        | Off lap                |  |                                |                           |                   |                          |
| 4. Use of object                              | Obj. pick-up/put down/holding | Obj. played with       | Obj. carer move                        | Obj. symbolically/rhythmically |                           |                   |                          |
| 5. Point                                      | Child points                  | Carer points           |  |                                |                           |                   |                          |
| 6. Symbolic activity (e.g. actions to a song) | clapping                      | Symbolic side to side  | Symbolic stepping                      | Symbolic jump or bounced       | Symbolic holding hands    | Symbolic lie down | Symbolic actions         |
| 7. Movement                                   | stand                         | sit                    | run                                    | walk                           | Jump Not symbolic         | Turn towards/away | Moving body. e.g. wiggle |
| 8. Eye contact                                | Eye contact peer              | Eye contact carer      | Eye contact leader                     | Eye contact adult              |                           |                   |                          |
| 9. Affection Not practical touch              | Affection touch - carer       | Affection kiss - carer | Affection touch - child                | Affection snuggle carer        | Affection snuggle - child |                   |                          |
| 10. Speak                                     | Speak child                   | Speak Carer            | Peer speak                             | Speak leader to child          | Speak adult to            | adults talking    |                          |

|           |             |             |             |              |                 |                 |                  |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
|           |             |             |             |              | child           | to other        |                  |
| 11. Smile | Smile child | Smile carer | Smile adult | Smile leader | Big smile child | Big smile carer | Big smile leader |
| 12. Laugh | Laugh child | Laugh carer | Laugh adult | Laugh leader |                 |                 |                  |